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Opposite a private business whereby the owner of the business is responsible for the success of the business, leaders in the EPA are not beholden to investors and employees to turn a profit. Therefore, at the end of the year (calendar or fiscal), when everyone is taking their use or lose, there is no one around to sign off on administrative products. In a private business, the owner/president puts in the most hours to keep the business afloat. In EPA, the newest, most inexperienced staff are the ones putting in the most hours. I don't know how this can be addressed. The sign-off process to get anything through is ridiculous at times. It can add a few weeks, to several months to the process. Either eliminate some in the sign off chain or give supervisors time to do their jobs.

Printing out routing slips to request signature from management. I would like to see if this can be done electronically instead.

We already partner well with states and tribes and such. They respect us and we respect them and we seek help from each other when necessary.

Have more face to face engagement and interaction. Provide examples of success stories or case studies that can be used to inspire more work with these stakeholders.

We already provide great customer service (?) to states. We provide trainings, money, advice, leadership, technical help, when asked. Regulators need to stop criticizing the Federal EPA to the point that if a state wants to ask for help, they are made to feel like they are asking a bunch of circus clowns to help. Our state (and tribe, etc.) counterparts respect us and undermining that is not productive to anyone.

Call people back and be available to answer questions from our stakeholders and the community. They are happy to hear from us and appreciate that we reach out to them.

No. I believe that Obama's cuts were deep enough and have already made it hard for the EPA to fulfill our mission. More cuts would make it so that EPA employees are demoralized. We already work our butts off and are hampered at every turn. More of that would be detrimental to the country.

Encourage management to appreciate staff more and develop better relationships with the people who report to them.

Of course there are. But EPA staff is already so overworked, that no one has the time or energy to implement new processes.

Yes - for grant work we should be moving away from printing emails, work plans and other grant related files. This is cumbersome, wastes a lot of time and is inefficient. Perhaps a database or on-line repository can be used instead. This would increase efficiency especially if an audit is ever done on the grant.

Stop worrying so much about the costs to corporations for environmental regulations. The public doesn't care if a corporation makes only \$9 billion in profit vs. \$10 billion. States need and want a strong federal agency when things go wrong and they don't have the money to fix it. That is what we are there for.

Learn what other agencies do and see how our work complements their work and how we can leverage our resources more effectively.

We have the best staff. We are dedicated beyond words. We believe in our mission and care about our country and world. We do more than just like statuses on Facebook or speak out at rallies. We live it. We choose to make our careers all about it. Those that are engineers or lawyers could make way more money practicing in the private sector, but choose to put their efforts onto something that will benefit the people of the U.S. We are intelligent, hard working, and dedicated. Many are scientists with analytical minds that always work with accountability and efficiency at the forefront. We are criticized and made to feel like our work is unappreciated at the highest levels these days. This didn't happen under Obama. Even though he had to make cuts to our budget, we worked with him to do that, and we still felt that we were appreciated for all our hard work. We worked harder and more efficiently because we felt appreciated. Stopping the demoralizing comments and policies is the best thing that a boss could do to increase efficiency and accountability.

Consider being more flexible as needed when staff ask to work from home. Having a good work - life balance is essential to happy employees and more productivity.

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Answer provided from a private/public sector procurement/acquisition perspective.

A: The field overall is old fashioned and the best practices are as such (i.e. duplication of contractual filing both paper and electronic; both manual and automated document routing procedures; partial implementation of system automation). Primary example, the public sectors procurement key/bible is the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) <http://farsite.hill.af.mil/> and it was designed as a one stop shop but each department and agency has subparts, that add additional layers of interpretation and applicability. The layers need to be peeled back and more standard regulatory requirements applied across all agencies/departments.

There are too many administrative reviews for regulatory packages - the administrative reviews take up to 3 months out of the regulatory schedule, which is usually 3 times more that rule writers actually get to write the regulations. I would cut some of the reviews out - 25 people reviewing the same package for grammar and commas is just wasteful.

Answer provided from a private/public sector procurement/acquisition perspective.

A: Leading by example with clear/transparent channels of communication from the top down. Defining the core of the agencies mission/requirement and the necessary partnership with each and every party/customer. The bottom line is about creating and communicating the bigger picture of how we all play a piece/part in the achieving environmental results.

Also suggest greater private and public sector cross over and a more streamlined acquisition approach. Share and reapply experiences; as the two sectors are two very different worlds and many of the professionals in the field have minimal exposure to one vs the other; making it difficult to relate and/or innovate. Example, the private sector focuses on the overall supply chain and the public sector specializes on individual pieces of the chain without the overall connection.

We need to be able to do site visits to learn more about the private sector issues with our regulations. We need to be involved more with states when developing regulations, but when we reach out, no one is interested in working with us.

Answer provided from a private/public sector procurement/acquisition perspective.

A: Understanding your role from varying perspectives/sectors is key. The simple term buying sums up both private and public sectors use of procurement, acquisition, contracting, etc. and no matter how large or small, the general practice/function remains the same. It is the purchase of a product or service that requires logistical supply or delivery from one point to another, to satisfy an overall customer or user need. Understanding the service or supply we are providing is key to providing better customer service.

Answer provided from a private/public sector procurement/acquisition perspective.

A: Better forecasting and planning practices for more efficient execution. The terms category/commodity management float around in both worlds and the bottom line is that there are existing specialties that make current practices overcomplicated, with too much oversight. Merge the overall customer requirement(s) administrative management together (i.e. EPA Contracting Officer Representatives are similar to private sector Program/Category/Quality managers) and automate processes (i.e. system flow through, such as contractual and financial interfacing and reporting capability).

Answer provided from a private/public sector procurement/acquisition perspective.

A: Recommend investing in one standard commercial procurement system, with applicable regulatory requirement and contractual vehicle selection; creating borders for customization and interpretation (i.e. GSA has made tremendous advancement and is under-utilized).

We need more electronic processes for collecting data and reviewing regulatory packages

A: Better understanding of roles and relationships with overall environmental execution; the downstream impact or flow-through of corporate/agency action.

If we could get states and EPA to use the same electronic reporting systems, we would be better able to share data and help the private sector by removing duplicate reporting requirements

A: Automation and clear transparent communication, with receptiveness and reward for change/innovation.

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- 1) Too much annual training. Stagger training, make it good for multiple years, or require a certain amount of CEUs per year. Update training tracking systems for annual EPA training, CORs, grants POs, etc.
- 2) Institute further use of electronic signatures on documents.
- 3) Simplify Concur interface for travelers - make it more intuitive. Travelers are not accountants or finance experts; the terminology and requirements are extremely difficult to understand.

Legal Reviews:

Legal reviews by EPA Attorney's (who are not prosecuting criminal investigations and nor are they appearing in court is a waste of time and money that can be spent on other important issues). U.S. Attorney's oversee or decline criminal investigations, not EPA Attorney's. This creates a conflict of interest when an EPA Attorney is telling agents what to write in reports and will not approve a legal review until their wording is placed in the report. These practices undermine the U.S. Attorney's authority and will eventually cost EPA when an agent testifies under oath that they are not the author of the report. EPA Attorney's spend countless hours on criminal cases that the U.S. Attorney's oversee, this time can be spent on agency issues rather than criminal matters being handled by the Department of Justice.

Open communication with partners.

Suggestion:

Ensure an EPA representative are placed in these various office as liaisons to support achieving better relationships and results.

Full access to and integration of databases containing environmental information.

Suggestion:

Recommend evaluating customers needs on all levels to improve relationships with our customers and essentially the public at large. Our customers are made up of the public and serve those communities, so reaching out is key. Partnership and visibility on the local levels is important to understanding the concerns and issues at large.

Yes - build climate change considerations into all projects and programs. Build infrastructure that is more resilient to reduce costs for replacement after storms, floods, etc. Set water quality standards and establish TMDLs that take into account changes in water temperature, etc. that are occurring. Being proactive in all of our programs on climate issues will make it easier to achieve environmental standards into the future.

Investigations Side:

I do see untapped opportunities in investigations but many of the agenda's are forced by senior leadership who have outdated philosophies and tactics (particularly in the OIG). Within the cadre of agents there are untapped potential from agents who have been police officers, detectives, special agents in other federal agencies, and military investigators. These resources are invaluable, but these agents are leaving due to the stale methodologies of folks who did not perform criminal investigations but rather security or protective service functions as law enforcement. This inexperience has affected the agency and forced second criminal investigations over matters that were previously closed because they were not handled properly the first time. Having the right experience, leadership, and personnel would reduce cost and inefficiencies; especially redoubling efforts having agents travel to distant locations spending more money on travel, hotel, and other resources.

Electronic signatures.

Investigative Suggestions: There are technologies that could show leadership pie charts, statistics, open cases, closed cases, pending cases, types of cases, convictions, restitution amounts, and so much more; however, we have outdated technology because of the stale leadership philosophies or inexperience.

We can accomplish more by reducing the amount of work being duplicated. Mission and goals are key, followed by oversight and accountability.

Yes.

Currently, I am attempting to implement new practices considered by other agencies (as best practices) in areas such as evidence, ammunition accountability and purchases, training, policy reviews, and investigative processes; however, it is an uphill battle. These practices would save thousands of dollars, increase accountability, and improve efficiency all of the areas mentioned. For example, using training ammunition vs. duty ammunition for training purposes. Duty rounds cost .50 cents where training rounds cost .25 cents. If a person use 60 rounds to qualify with duty ammunition they are wasting \$30.00 vs. \$15.00; times 4 quarters for training- \$120.00 vs. \$60.00; times the number of agents in the agency (i.e.: $57 \times 120 = \$6,840$) vs. (i.e.: $57 \times 60 = 3420$) for one weapon annually. Most agents have two weapons, and have to qualify with two weapons every quarter (4 quarters). This simple example of a best practice can save thousands of dollars in one in area;

Prior to my arrival, there was no annual budget, no uniformed pricing and no accountability with regards to what is on hand or being expended in each office. Accountability and oversight is key to reduce cost.

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Recently I have noticed that our communications, interactions, and work are subject to new rules and heightened scrutiny from EPA HQs. The level of scrutiny our work is receiving from leaders who would normally not be involved (i.e. senior management to HQ hierarchical review of documents) is inefficient. Each program and office has signatory delegations for a reason...so HQs does not have to be involved in every decision and can focus on their work. It takes much more time to go through review, concurrence, and get a letter signed...and time equals tax payer money.

We already achieve good results when we can partner with the states and communities and spend time with our stakeholders. Our budget over the years has already made it increasingly difficult to travel to state offices, meetings, conferences, etc. Dramatically decreasing the budget will only hurt our ability to achieve better environmental results by hampering our ability to travel out into the community or visit the state to foster that relationship and build trust. Phone calls and emails are not a good substitutes for face-to-face interaction, and a skeleton budget will make travel and that crucial interaction impossible.

One of the complaints I have heard from the states and tribes is EPA no longer has the staff to effectively carry out its responsibilities to the states and tribes, assist them with their programs, or travel to their offices to partner on projects or attend meetings. I have watched our budget be slashed dramatically through the years, and I have had to apologize to our states and tribes for not being able to spend the time and attention they need to effectively run their programs and carry out their responsibilities. Continuing to target EPA in the budget process, and decreasing the amount of grant money available to the states and tribes will render federal, state, and tribal environmental programs completely ineffective.

Eliminate political appointees since they come with no experience or pertinent skills, time is wasted getting them up to speed to that they can enact their political agenda, and they are undoubtedly paid more than those who have worked hard to protect the environment and the American people throughout their careers as scientists and the like.

EPA's budget has been slashed over the years to the point that EPA has a skeleton crew of administrative staff. That means we have scientists and engineers (GS 9-13) doing administrative work (e.g. finalizing, printing, and sending letters out). A scientist's hourly salary is was more than an admin's salary, and this is a huge waste of taxpayer money when a scientist has to do admin. work. They often don't have the skills or resources to do this admin work, and it takes a scientist much longer to complete these task. Additionally, this takes time away from completing their actual duties: maintaining environmental protection for all Americans.

Another way to reduce costs and inefficiencies is if Congress actually passed a budget (i.e. not be on a perpetual CR). Every time a CR gets ready to expire, and a shutdown is looming, it costs EPA/federal government millions of tax payer dollars to go through the proper procedures to prepare for a shutdown.

Additionally, cutting EPA's budget, cutting FTE's, eliminating programs, and closing offices will cost millions, and make the agency even more inefficient because we will not have the staff to maintain environmental protection for all Americans or assist or states, tribes, and other stakeholders.

EPA has struggled through the years to figure out a way to go totally electronic due to lack of resources. Implement an electronic records system that stores past and current records for access by all of EPA. Get rid of requiring paper documents be submitted by the regulated community, and go to electronic signatures. This will eliminate the space and resources needed to store and access paper records.

Our activities are already aligned in areas of shared responsibility and mutual interest with the states and federal agencies. We are all driven by statute and regulation, and we work together to accomplish our responsibilities under these statutes. We also partner and assist our states in areas that are not regulatory driven (e.g. nonpoint source programs). The state wants to reduce pollution, prevent issues, and protect its citizens, and we help them accomplish this absent a statute. There are also areas the state does not have the resources or political will to undertake, and they rely on EPA to step up and do that work (e.g. NSR enforcement). Slashing our budget even more than it already has been, decreasing the amount of grant money available to the states, and eliminating programs (e.g. OECA and nonpoint source) will ensure we accomplish less in areas of shared responsibility and mutual interest.

Electronic records management system - a lot of states, and private industry have gone electronic, and the federal governmental has lagged way far behind in this area. This will improve our efficiency by having information readily available for staff and our stakeholders, increase accountability and transparency, and reduce costs by not requiring floor space and buildings devoted to the storage of paper records.

It does not prevent me from doing my job, but Environmental Justice issues raised by community members with a lack of good faith [where EPA is making every effort to protect the alleged EJ community] are given more attention by EPA than is appropriate. EJ concerns should not be a weapon for self-appointed community activists to make ridiculous claims for the need for EPA to give special treatment for the community in question - when EPA is already doing its job. EPA tends to be overly protective if anything. I flat out do not believe EPA employees would ignore health concerns just because a community was poor or of color. The EJ staff employees in my estimation probably spend very little time doing real EJ work because there are not that many new sites to be evaluated. The EJ staff probably spends most of their time doing nothing or creating busy work to create the appearance of useful activity.

Department of Defense agencies often take ridiculous positions. For example, DoD at one time asserted the position that an explosive is not a hazardous substance. Focusing on ways to resolve EPA-DoD disputes more quickly would be helpful. A dispute resolution should be mandatory on all DoD agencies. For example, not just the Army or Navy, but rather all DoD agencies.

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IGMS is the grants/IA database. Efforts have been ongoing to update it but they are very slow (years) and I personally haven't seen significant changes result from the efforts yet. I think changes have been recently made on the grants side but they are still in progress for the IAs. For example, in the IA decision memorandums, there are a number of redundant or unnecessary questions. Also, the programmatic baseline process needs to be revised. It is not clear who actually reviews those when regional staff submits them and what, if anything, is done with the information. The questions also need to be updated as some either aren't necessary or aren't effective.

Continue with implementing successful voluntary programs that EPA has such as Energy Star and Wastewise. These involve the private sector and are very appreciated. Perhaps they should even be expanded to the small business community if not done so already. Assist state/local communities with improving recycling rates by providing grants to better understand waste management/recycling infrastructure and to undertake studies. Also, EPA is needed to convene leaders and decision makers in recycling and other environmental arenas. EPA also can serve more of a role in providing guidance (not regulations) on standardizing approaches in recycling and other environmental arenas. Sustainability/sustainable development is also an area that EPA can focus on more and promote/support at a higher level, particularly in the private sector. The private sector already focuses on sustainability and has benefitted from it. EPA can become a more valuable partner in that effort such as with regard to sustainability standards and research, etc.. It is supposed to be one of our priorities, however, I haven't seen it implemented much at least at the regional level. We do have a webpage on it including a blog/video series.

Fund states at levels that allow them to continue to run critical environmental programs. Many states do not have the budgets to completely take over programs that are currently funded by EPA. If state funding takes a big hit, then it is highly likely that states in each region will return programs back to EPA - this will effectively create more work for a diminished EPA staff.

There used to be a toll free hotline that EPA provided, however, I'm not sure if it still exists and if it does, it is not advertised enough since even I don't know if it exists as an EPA employee. EPA also needs to do a better job at marketing and improving communication about what role it plays and how it serves the public. The public at large is not very aware of EPA's voluntary programs, for example.

EPA used to make more of an effort to do compliance assistance as an alternative to enforcement, particularly with regard to the small business community. Not much of that is done anymore or at least it appears that way. This is an opportunity that will assist the regulated community in reducing costs and inefficiencies. Internally, EPA has begun promoting/implementing the LEAN concept to reduce costs and inefficiencies. This effort needs to be focused on more and promoted by management. It needs to become a part of doing business at EPA.

In the last few years, EPA has placed videoconferencing technology in it's office conference rooms. This technology does not get utilized much and it should since it cost \$ to purchase/install. Instead of spending so much time and money on travel, videoconferencing should be promoted/supported more as it was intended to be.

Drinking water contamination has become a huge, prevalent issue. Most of the drinking water enforcement/monitoring falls to the states and they cannot keep up. USEPA needs to assist more with this shared responsibility/mutual interest. We do to some extent, however, it is not nearly enough.

Program/project evaluation is a very useful effort and best practice that EPA attempted in the past but wasn't very successful at fully implementing. Management didn't support it enough so it faded. It needs to become a part of the EPA culture and fully embraced as I'm sure is the case in the private sector and other organizations. The CDC has an approach to program evaluation and implements it.

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The annual required online trainings are a huge waste of time. I really don't learn anything, and I try to just push through them as fast as possible. Some of them don't even apply to my job, that is extra frustrating!! The leave requesting module in PeoplePlus is way too complicated. The whole start day/end day menu does not make sense to most folks, and the system will not allow you to request 2 different types of leave on one day. It is unnecessarily complicated. Employees should be able to pull back requests as well when needed.

EPA should not maintain dive teams. The expenses associated with that are huge, and we could save a lot of money by contracting that work out when it is necessary. In our region the Dive Team has a dedicated vehicle, and the members participate in long and expensive training events. That doesn't make sense to me. We also have "operations offices" in each of our regional states. I think we need to be rethinking those. It makes sense to have an office in Anchorage, but I don't know how we justify offices in Olympia or Portland specifically.

We need to be doing more community-driven and community-engaged research, answering questions that are relevant to the everyday lives of Americans with direct impact on communities. We could set up local EPA hubs across the country where researchers work directly with community members. Joining forces with citizen science would enhance EPA's accountability, relevance, and reputation.

I actually think we do this pretty well.

Yes. We have pushed so many administrative tasks onto the backs of our high graded staff because we've eliminated support staff. If we had an "assistant" type position in each work group, e.g. Budget Assistant, Environmental Protection Assistant, HR Assistant, etc., then we could increase the work efficiency and effectiveness of the higher graded staff. It is just plain silly for a GS-13 to spend time doing work that could be done by a GS-7 or 9.

Our IT tools aren't the best. Many employees still have heavy laptops that you can't really use for teleworking.

We need larger, faster computers, servers actually. We are increasingly using large databases for our research, such as Medicare, and there is not enough space on our computers for this. Invest in technological infrastructure. Another big help would be to have tech support who are actually federal employees and who are adequately compensated. Our current tech support team (locally) is run down and inefficient because they are so overworked and undercompensated.

Share data resources and expertise with HHS. HHS (i.e., FDA) have large healthcare databases and other resources that we are replicating here at EPA. I've worked at both agencies and I find myself rebuilding the same systems over again, requiring hundreds of hours of work. This replication is time consuming and inefficient. We need to draw from the same well instead of building a whole separate well.

Of interest might be FDA's Sentinel Initiative which provides real time or near real time signal detection in claims data. Pair this with environmental data and you have yourself a winning, innovative system.

Many of the administrative processes that I have to use as a supervisor at EPA are not user friendly. Because I have to routinely use them, I and other managers are constantly encountering situations where our time could be more efficiently and effectively used. Key examples are with travel software (Concur) and time keeping software (PeoplePlus). These are systems that are necessary but not user friendly. In People Plus, I would like the ability to aggregate time for a day and not see time per each accounting code. If I could do this, it would enable to get all information that I need to see to approve on one screen. Without it, I need to go back and forth multiple times between screens.

The underground storage tank program is a program that is implemented in large part by the states (except in Indian Country). The states rely on federal leaking underground storage tank (LUST) Trust fund money. The EPA provides this money via grants to the states. The states use the money largely to provide staffing to inspectors (prevention) and cleanup staff (cleanup). Cleanup money is more plentiful than prevention money yet the prevention program continues to absorb disproportionate amount of budget cuts. It would be better if the states could have the flexibility to combine their money (prevention and cleanup) and find the best way to ensure both programs work well and work together.

We already do a good job here. I don't have any ideas but I would be willing to hear what these customers suggested as areas for improvement.

I think we should seriously consider implementing all the Government Accountability Office (GAO) recommendations. They are experts at understanding how government works and they have great management and accounting skills. Every year since 2011 GAO has evaluated federal programs that overlap, are fragmented or are duplicative. It found dozens for the 2017 annual report. Rather than cutting needed programs like the massive reductions proposed by the President's 2018 budget which targeted Environmental Protection Agency, for a 31 percent reduction under we should focus on implementing GAO suggestions to make government more cost-effective. We should start with GAO recommendations and ask individual agencies to go further evaluating these recommendations. \$61 Billion in savings is what is at stake here.

Not aware of any.

We already attempt to not overlap with states but some oversight of states is necessary. The only thing that I think we can do better is be more transparent about what we are doing and why we are doing it.

I appreciate being asked this question. We should allow government agencies to benchmark other agencies. It is difficult to take any best practices from private industry and apply to the government sector. However, we can learn from sister agencies and perhaps from states and tribes.

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Fear of losing my job, and watching politicians celebrate my potentially losing everything my family has...leads to the most inefficient days anyone could have at work. Give us certainty and job security and we will support your aims. We are here to work for the mission of the EPA, and support ANY current administration's understanding of it so long as it is moral, ethical, legal and constitutional. A little respect and job security will go a long way towards making you appear successful to the public. Give it a try.

Partnership building requires thoughtful training. Develop a comprehensive, sequential and cumulative training program for EPA to learn how to facilitate and be open to true partnerships.

Respect treaties with tribes, such as the Standing Rock Sioux. Don't work against states which have established more stringent standards, such as the California fuel efficiency standards. Expand programs that support private sector innovation, such as Energy Star.

My job is responsible for supporting dozens of good paying contractor jobs in rust-belt areas, using only American-made materials onsite. The work they accomplish remediates formerly toxic sites that can be redeveloped into new economic engines for these areas. Why do not advertise this? Why does the public not know we do this? It is insane that people only consider the EPA to be a regulation agency when so much of what we do is foster grants and contracts that lead to real trainings and jobs. We are already an economic-enhancing agency. Advertise those real successes.

Provide adequate funding for efforts to streamline regulations. There are some areas where EPA and the regulated community are working together to simplify regulations and to remove obsolete provisions. Drastic funding cuts will hamper these efforts.

The regulated community would benefit greatly from a more predictable regulatory environment. When each new administration radically shifts the policy focus, it destabilizes the economy and discourages investment. Many corporations have been holding back for years waiting to see where the shoe will fall on climate change.

Telework expansion will allow for less office space needs.

Focus resources on reducing emissions of greenhouse gasses, which pose the greatest risk to the health, economic competitiveness and national security of Americans during the coming decades. (see <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/03/trump-s-defense-chief-cites-climate-change-national-security-challenge>)

We have them already, it's just a matter of training and having internal processes change to utilize them.

Continue to simplify and modernize reporting. There are many areas where reporting can be simplified, (especially if regulations are streamlined and obsolete provisions removed). EPA's reporting infrastructure needs to be upgraded to 21st century standards, migrating to web-based forms. However, drastic funding cuts will cripple these efforts.

Expanding telework is far more efficient than eliminating any region. The opportunities to work closely with the states and partners is then available for face-to-face because people live in that state or area.

Change employee performance evaluations to reflect a simpler way to discern high performers. Give only three choices: Unsuccessful, Fully Successful, and Exceptional. This way, we can measure the person that does 100% effectively, and anything else they bring to their position allows them to be recognized as "above and beyond." Right now, there are multiple areas above "fully successful" and no one truly knows what the difference between them. Also, add 360-evaluations instead of just relying on one supervisor to rate the person.

The communications structure within ORD needs to be overhauled, streamlined, or at least DEFINED. There is a matrix within the matrix - we have ORD comms, national research program comms leads, comms staff working under the NPDs, and lab comms staff. And there's no definition or process for who is leading what. Lab comms staff are left reacting to the needs of all the other comms staff. This structure is inefficient and redundant. If all the levels will remain, at least define who leads what and what responsibility each level has. It's unclear and frustrating to try and work within this loose structure. It leads to inefficiencies in reviews, no consistency across EPA-produced comms products, and an inefficient, non-strategic approach to producing comms products altogether.

We need to take a good hard look at comms teams and activities, and determine how to streamline development and review of products. We need to develop better definition of the roles/responsibilities for each level/team and determine how we can all work together in a more structured and productive way. As it stands, there are limited processes in place and the lab level comms teams are left not really knowing what its role or responsibility is.

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I think we are missing a crucial question in this survey:

Describe any relatively minor legislative fixes (in environmental laws) which would enable significant efficiencies in the ongoing implementation of the national federal/state regulatory/environmental protection scheme?

Oftentimes it is the underlying environmental legislation that causes enormous inefficiencies at both the EPA and state levels. A piece of legislation is typically well intentioned (and often bipartisan) but have well meaning bureaucrats spinning their wheels seemingly endlessly trying to implement some small aspect of the law (that was not well thought out).

In all my years at the EPA I have never seen us be proactive with the hill in trying to get some minor legislative fixes. Instead we spin wheels trying to implement as is. I realize asking congress to change laws is not easy, but I strongly recommend OCIR going on the offensive with the hill on some low hanging fruit. I am sure a survey question like this would bring that fruit to light.

Needing to wait on multiple levels of approval in precisely the correct order when filling out requests such as for training.

Better communication and transparency about process (not necessarily always data due to CBI concerns)

Again, better communication and transparency about both process and making them understand our perspective on regulation and assessment

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Better coordinate regulatory policies, especially allowable limits and toxicological assessments, among various offices in order to improve internal consistency

Project management software

Better communication in order to find out where local governments or other agencies are deficient and where they have expertise so that we can fill in the gaps for each other.

Better website and PR.

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Publishing items in the Federal Register. Consider reducing the types of actions that need to be published (maybe only rules, and final decisions). Others could effectively be published on EPA's website, or in the docket.

Simplify and streamline the task of hiring. The time it takes to bring on new staff is so long and difficult, it is hard to get the best people for the job.

PASSWORDS: When you access as many applications as I do, it seems there is always a password to change. Changing passwords takes a lot of valuable time away from actually doing work. I propose that, where we can, we do what the FOIAonline folks did and start using the EPA Region 7 Smartcard in place of passwords.

Our public participation process is a very good way of getting input and buy-in from our stakeholders. Allowing this process to continue would be beneficial. However, delays in being able to publish information on leads to distrust among stakeholders.

By sticking to the schedules EPA has established would help our stakeholders to better anticipate when our actions are being completed, and plan appropriately.

Reduce the information in FR rules, which would reduce the cost. Do away with any requirements for paper documentation and move to a completely electronic workflow. Improve IT systems to help manage the projects at OPP, and to help keep companies informed of the progress of their actions.

yes! SmartLabel would be a huge benefit to our program. All of the document processing functions should be reviewed for the Office, and standardized, to help find information quickly.

Improving our IT systems would help efficiency greatly!

Alternative dispute resolution (ADR), including mediation and facilitation by neutral third parties, and training in ADR and Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution (ECCR) approaches in working with all stakeholders results in greater customer satisfaction with interactions with EPA, particularly when complex, contentious issues are at stake. Through a (new) EPA order, the Administrator could encourage EPA programs and regions to routinely consider using these approaches more frequently during key rule making, policy development, public engagement and enforcement activities.

Use of ECCR at EPA and other federal agencies has been shown to reduce costs, improve governance, by resulting in more broadly supported solutions, support better informed agency decisions, and result in more durable agreements to resolve environmental disputes. ECCR can be especially useful in areas requiring collaboration among federal agencies, resolving inter-agency disputes, more effective engagement with federally recognized Indian tribes, in rulemaking and to avoid or minimize litigation costs and delays.

A forthcoming 10 year review of federal ECCR for the Office of Management and Budget documents the value of increased use of this approach. ECCR promotes more active, effective and transparent input from all parties. In addition, EPA conducted a survey of all agency attorneys who led cases during FY 2011 to FY 2014 in which litigation was put on hold to use ECCR. The results of this survey were used to compare time spent on ECCR cases versus litigation or unassisted settlement. The findings from this study included:

???ECCR requires 45% less time to reach a decision than litigation would have.

???ECCR requires 30% fewer staff members than litigation would have.

???ECCR requires 79% fewer lead attorney hours than litigation would have and 38% fewer lead attorney hours than unassisted settlement.

These results underestimate benefits because they do not consider avoidance of any follow-on litigation, would have resulted in avoidance of even greater costs and delays in decision making.

EPA???s Alternative Dispute Resolution Law Office (ADRLO) has an expert team that offers coaching, access to national

When there are conflicts in the workplace, EPA incurs significant costs both in terms of the costs to resolve conflict through formal processes and in terms of lost productivity, which can often spread beyond the initial involved individuals. EPA has a highly effective, but severely limited Workplace Solutions program which addresses workplace conflict through informal processes and provides staff and managers with skills to prevent and reduce future conflict. Unfortunately, over the years, this program has lost nearly all of its resources and is currently supported by one (outstanding) expert and no funds. In addition, the location of the program, isolated from the rest of EPA's Alternative Dispute Resolution resources effectively eliminates opportunities to flexibly shift resources to areas of greatest need. Bottom line: increase resources to the highly effective, yet overburdened Workplace Solutions program from 1 FTE and no extramural funds to at least 5 FTE and at least \$200K/year in extramural resources. As part of the reorganization of EPA, move the Workplace Solutions Program from its current home in the same group as the Labor and Employee Relations staff to the Alternative Dispute Resolution Law Office. ADRLO also offers the advantage of a more neutral location, making it more likely that staff will seek and trust that the approach that will be taken will not be face the appearance of conflicts of interest based on the organizational location of the program.

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I would say in general that EPA, in most instances, creates workgroups to develop a project or come up with recommendations and it takes FOREVER to get any actual work done. I would like to see quicker action and decision making across all aspects of the Agency. Also, our managers are in too many meetings and are not available to staff to assist with planning and direction of work. One problem I would like to see addressed is with poor performers (or just people who are unqualified for a job) who just get transferred around and become someone else's problem. As an example, I'll just say I'm in Region A and we hired a manager from Region B and the staff in Region B were so happy that manager was leaving. That manager, now in Region A, is not (based on what I know) qualified for the job he was hired for and I believe he creates problems for the group he manages as well as the entire Region which relies on services from his group. In addition to that, he brought an employee with him from Region B because that person was on the verge of getting fired from Region B. This employee is also inadequate for the work he has been assigned in Region A. This is extremely frustrating on so many levels and has created a lot of inefficiencies for getting work done.

Redundancy in a lot of administrative tasks. Update and synchronize software programs across the Agency and between sister agencies. Implement admin policies consistently between Regions. Reduce administrative staff from doing tasks technical employees could do on their own and hire more technical employees to better balance workload.

my work at EPA does not involve partnering with orgs outside EPA so I don't have anything to share on this.

Share information more, continue to develop and maintain productive working relationships with stakeholders, continue seeking stakeholder input. Invest in compliance assistance and voluntary programs.

my work at EPA does not involve partnering with orgs outside EPA so I don't have anything to share on this.

Be transparent and stick to good science. Put protection of public health and the environment first. Keep up funding to support these communities and the public who benefit from the work our agency does.

I think most employees in the Regional offices wonder why there are so many employees in HQ. The Regions are doing the on-the-ground work.

Update the regulations. Most of our core legislation is very outdated and cumbersome to enforce and implement efficiently and to be truly protective.

I think all of EPA's electronic systems are poorly designed, not intuitive nor user friendly. A few examples include putting in a leave request and travel request. Also, EPA's IT support for existing technology is poor. When SharePoint became available, there was no assistance in how to use it and no vision for using it in a way that would improve our work. As a result, it has not been utilized to its full potential and many of our work sharing processes are stuck in the dark ages. Also, EPA does not have a corporate solution for Intranet. Regions are doing their own thing and struggling because we don't have the necessary tools or resources or tech support.

There is HUGE opportunity to make improvements in this area. As part of a special project, I identified something like 21 different environmental and health topics that other Federal agencies do work on, in addition to EPA.

We work closely with states well already. They are key partners in almost everything we do. Other federal agencies could share information better and cooperate more on common goals. Multi agency inspections, enforcements, collaboration on planning for shared goals etc.

I don't have any suggestions for this topic but just want to thank you for doing this survey in a manner that people can provide real, useful feedback. The Employee Viewpoint Survey doesn't provide comment fields so if they rate something poorly, EPA has no idea why it was rated poorly, or what the details of the problem are and therefore can't take any action to correct the problem.

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KEEP ABREAST

1-be prepared to identify and measure the obsolescence of products and services and on the shelf.

2-in a routine manner keep abreast of the inventory.

3-what can we count? what can we measure? what criteria do you use to get rid of things that are obsolete?

PARTNERING

1-reach out to achieve better environmental results.

2-set a goal of reaching all states, all tribes in the US, all communities in the sates, and selected entities of the private sector.

PROVIDE BETTER CUSTOMER SERVICE

1-identify more and better ways to identify and measure customer service.

Bring IT work in house instead of contracting it out. There would be considerable savings for EPA and tax payers. EPA employees with IT back grounds would relish the chance to be more hands on and utilize and further develop their IT skills.

UNTAPPED OPPORTUNITIES

1-develop a routine that will keep managers and staffs up to date on new inventory and the value/cost of this new inventory..

consider

NEW TECHNOLOGIES

1-Inventory new technologies and compare them from agency to agency, and from state to state.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY/MUTUAL INTEREST

1-try to identify and combine activities that are duplicated from agency to agency or from state to state.

BEST PRACTICES

1-use both sides of the paper when copying.

2-use one side of the paper if there is a full blown rationale or justification to do so.

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I do a fair amount of emergency response work with EPA Region 7's Superfund program. EPA needs the capability to address Superfund sites that do not score for listing on the NPL, so are not part of EPA's remedial process, but also do not qualify for a removal action - these sites typical involve contaminated groundwater (EPA will provide alternate water via the removal program, but not address the groundwater contamination itself unless the site is listed on the NPL). I think the new administration's goals regarding redevelopment and infrastructure would align with addressing groundwater contamination that falls through the cracks in the Superfund process.

I think EPA must simply continue fostering open dialogue, communication, and trust with states. In a recent discussion with one of our state partners in EPA Region 7, someone from the Nebraska Attorney General's office stated how important EPA was to the State of Nebraska - that the State always tried to work with its small businesses and municipalities, but that EPA served a very important role in having the political will, resources, and expertise to take enforcement cases against companies and municipalities who will not come into compliance. He was very appreciative of EPA's role and said that EPA often gets criticized for being "the hammer", but that "the hammer" was very important and necessary to the State.

I think EPA must simply continue fostering open dialogue, communication, and trust with states. I think this includes ensuring regular face to face meetings occur with our state partners. In a recent discussion with one of our state partners in EPA Region 7, someone from the Nebraska Attorney General's office stated how important EPA was to the State of Nebraska - that the State always tried to work with its small businesses and municipalities, but that EPA served a very important role in having the political will, resources, and expertise to take enforcement cases against companies and municipalities who will not come into compliance. He was very appreciative of EPA's role and said that EPA often gets criticized for being "the hammer", but that "the hammer" was very important and necessary to the State.

EPA desperately needs a better record keeping system. The Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality has a record keeping system that is organized by facility - that is, organized by address so one can see the progression of what business operated at the facility over the years, and it is all located in the same location in NDEQ's files. They have recently upgraded so that all non-privileged information is available online, to anyone. EPA needs a system like this! It would be great if additional resources could be used to facilitate an overhaul of our recordkeeping practices.

See below we have a lot of duplication between OARM and OCFO

(Same comment as above) EPA desperately needs a better record keeping system. The Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality has a record keeping system that is organized by facility - that is, organized by address so one can see the progression of what business operated at the facility over the years, and it is all located in the same location in NDEQ's files. They have recently upgraded so that all non-privileged information is available online, to anyone. EPA needs a system like this! It would be great if additional resources could be used to facilitate an overhaul of our recordkeeping practices.

The agency's legacy separate financial systems should all be in the Compass accounting system.

I think EPA must simply continue fostering open dialogue, communication, and trust with states. In a recent discussion with one of our state partners in EPA Region 7, someone from the Nebraska Attorney General's office stated how important EPA was to the State of Nebraska - that the State always tried to work with its small businesses and municipalities, but that EPA served a very important role in having the political will, resources, and expertise to take enforcement cases against companies and municipalities who will not come into compliance. He was very appreciative of EPA's role and said that EPA often gets criticized for being "the hammer", but that "the hammer" was very important and necessary to the State.

Within EPA we have many IT shops that all do the same thing. An example is OCFO and OAM and OGD. Shouldn't we have one since its all financial mixed financial data?

EPA desperately needs a better record keeping system. The Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality has a record keeping system that is organized by facility - that is, organized by address so one can see the progression of what business operated at the facility over the years, and it is all located in the same location in NDEQ's files. They have recently upgraded so that all non-privileged information is available online, to anyone. EPA needs a system like this! It would be great if additional resources could be used to facilitate an overhaul of our recordkeeping practices.

Dealing with requests such as this survey and "regulatory review" of this Administration interferes with us doing our jobs well. We need to deal with real environmental and public health issues, not fake ones created by people bent on the destruction of this agency and government as a whole.

Make sure that we maintain a strong presence in establishing good science, strong national standards, and enforcement actions. We need to help the states and communities prepare for climate change, as it will have a devastating effect on many states and communities. We need to bring real science to the table and identify what federal resources are available for them to tap into.

Establish strict national air quality and water quality standards. Tackle the lead crisis in communities. They can't do that alone, as it's too expensive. Having uniform standards means there will be no "race to the bottom" in which some states will develop very weak environmental standards or have to succumb to large, politically connected businesses. Communicate with states and communities that the states and towns with the strongest, most stringent environmental standards are also the ones with the economies that are growing the most high-paying jobs for their states and communities.

Simplify the hiring process for prospective employees with college or graduate degrees. While our agency has an incredible wealth of smart scientists and other professionals, we need more smart people on board to ensure we can maintain our protection of the American people as natural retirement and attrition occur.

Stop trying to do e-discovery on the cheap. Provide sufficient resources to allow EPA to respond to FOIAs and litigation. The more quickly and fully we respond, the fewer lawsuits we will need to respond to. But we need enough money committed to the e-discovery process to ensure that it is done well, thoroughly, and in a timely manner.

Other federal agencies and the states rely on EPA to bring well researched science, strong environmental standards, and an even playing field to the table when we work with states, communities, industry, and the public. We are well regarded for our excellence in all areas. It is difficult to see how realigning us would improve our effectiveness or efficiency. Up till now, we have been seen as apolitical, and it is vital that we continue to be non-political to ensure the confidence of the American people.

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Dealing with requests such as this survey and "regulatory review" of this Administration interferes with us doing our jobs well. We need to deal with real environmental and public health issues, not fake ones created by people bent on the destruction of this agency and government as a whole.

The Action Development Process is inefficient and cumbersome. Most participants in EPA work groups seek to advance their individual perspective and do not try to balance competing objectives in establishing policy. Lead offices are forced to compromises to face substantial delays to elevate issues to senior levels to obtain a more balanced perspective.

Make sure that we maintain a strong presence in establishing good science, strong national standards, and enforcement actions. We need to help the states and communities prepare for climate change, as it will have a devastating effect on many states and communities. We need to bring real science to the table and identify what federal resources are available for them to tap into.

States, tribes and local communities need technical and financial resources to carry out the actions necessary to protect public health and the environment we need to provide assistance as possible and /or to provide them with the tools and information they need to obtain the necessary resources.

Establish strict national air quality and water quality standards. Tackle the lead crisis in communities. They can't do that alone, as it's too expensive. Having uniform standards means there will be no "race to the bottom" in which some states will develop very weak environmental standards or have to succumb to large, politically connected businesses. Communicate with states and communities that the states and towns with the strongest, most stringent environmental standards are also the ones with the economies that are growing the most high-paying jobs for their states and communities.

Involving State partners and stakeholders in the development or review of policy and guidance prior to release can assure policies will be more readily implemented when final.

Simplify the hiring process for prospective employees with college or graduate degrees. While our agency has an incredible wealth of smart scientists and other professionals, we need more smart people on board to ensure we can maintain our protection of the American people as natural retirement and attrition occur.

Research activities could be more directly focused on resolving programmatic data gaps and uncertainties.

Stop trying to do e-discovery on the cheap. Provide sufficient resources to allow EPA to respond to FOIAs and litigation. The more quickly and fully we respond, the fewer lawsuits we will need to respond to. But we need enough money committed to the e-discovery process to ensure that it is done well, thoroughly, and in a timely manner.

Standardized electronic reporting and recordkeeping will greatly enhance the effectiveness of the Agency and our state partners in overseeing the critical programs to protect public health and the environment.

Other federal agencies and the states rely on EPA to bring well researched science, strong environmental standards, and an even playing field to the table when we work with states, communities, industry, and the public. We are well regarded for our excellence in all areas. It is difficult to see how realigning us would improve our effectiveness or efficiency. Up till now, we have been seen as apolitical, and it is vital that we continue to be non-political to ensure the confidence of the American people.

Better coordination of activities to more effectively address multi exposure route contaminants. There are some contaminants that are present in Food, Consumer Products, Air, Soil & Dust and Water. We could better work with our colleagues at FDA, CPSC and in the various media programs in EPA to better target where we can most effectively reduce exposure.

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Microsoft Outlook is an amazing program with so many features but my coworkers and I experience countless issues with it and it really creates a lot of delay. Even though it is the go-to platform for federal agencies it stymies my work and creates undue frustration. A more expedient service (or an overhaul to Outlook) would be appreciated.

Having HQ review each and every FR notice we sign. Not necessary if action is noncontroversial and supported by the state.

The state and local community rely on resources provided by EPA, so taking those away does not necessarily help lower levels of government unless they are systematically redistributed. Keep up the grant programs.

Create a definitive jurisdictional directory showing which issues fall to which authority. I receive a lot of calls for issues that the state primarily deals with and I'm sure the public is frustrated by getting redirected constantly.

see answer to Q1.

broader use and acceptance of Sharepoint and OneDrive for document review and approval. Use of electronic submittal of all forms for FR publication.

Provide more resources to overarching programs like Making a Visible Difference and Urban Waters. These are programs in which EPA directly partners with other federal agencies and levels of government, but it is hard to retain partners when capacity is limited and there is a constant question of whether projects that are initiated can be continued.

Our region is unique in that travel preparers create travel for all EPA staff instead of having staff prepare their own travel. This saves time and money since travel preparer staff is specifically trained in using Concur and is most up-to-date with travel guidance and policies.

Within regulatory development jobs, the amount of paperwork and signatures needed for very minor rulemaking efforts (i.e., Tier 3, non-significant, direct final rulemakings that are essentially technical corrections and/or CFR housekeeping) is unnecessary. For instance, requiring the Administrator's signature to just update facility NAICS codes to OMB's updated NAICS codes (an exercise that happens every 5 years) requires jumping through many bureaucratic hoops. It would streamline processes that fall under the category of non-significant, no net burden, and Tier 3 rulemakings (again, these would primarily encompass regular updates of CFR text to note other agencies' updates) to only require the signatures of the respective office's Assistant Administrator.

Providing at least as many opportunities for disadvantaged communities (i.e., communities for whom the Office of Environmental Justice serves) to speak and present their concerns and suggestions, as are presented to industry. EPA should continually renew its commitment to protecting human health and the environment among those who most need assistance. Such venues could include webinars or town halls that are actively promoted on social media and press outlets.

Additionally, encouraging (and perhaps setting aside budget dollars to do so) EPA staff to visit the areas their work affects (includes both communities and industry) would be greatly beneficial. Establishing and maintaining personal connections promotes better customer service, helps EPA staffers to understand the severity or complexity of issues surrounding different geographic regions or industries, and motivates EPA to commit to working towards the agency's mission.

For reporting programs (e.g., Chemical Data Reporting), aligning their reporting software would be extremely beneficial to both EPA and the reporting community. While reporting requirements across different programs may not be able to change easily (there are many statutory requirements and bases for the regulations; submitted CBI/trade secrets also create challenges in aligning programs), streamlining the online reporting software to auto-fill in other relevant reporting programs whenever possible (which, again, may not be too frequently).

this answer doesn't directly answer the question, but in the last 8-10 years I think EPA has lost its focus. For example-- why is EPA HQ spending resources and staff salary to develop what is essentially an "other" category on forms where one identifies gender (SOGI)? How is that related to environmental protection!? Why is E-P-A focusing on solely social issues. Some things have environmentally sounding titles, but don't actually do anything. My suggestion is to reduce or eliminate activities that are not related to EPA's mission--protecting human health and the environment.

2--I think all the of the restrictions that are currently in place about "external activities" are hamstringing the regular work of EPA. I realize that upper management @ HQ would want to know about press events or high profile public events, but having to report a technical meeting with a university or citizen is soo unwieldy. It's also very confusing about what upper mgmt. (I guess in HQ) really wants to know about.

EPA used to have more voluntary compliance programs--what ever happened to those? EPA could make better use of CRADAs?--I can;t remember what this stands for, but its some sort of public-private partnership agreement.

EPA should mirror customer service like those private companies known for outstanding customer service, Disney, Apple, etc. Disney has a leadership institute that teaches these principles. Send the Regular employees who do the work to training there--not managers/supervisors.

If regular employees had direct access to provide ideas, etc. to the highest levels. I think a lot of good ideas get tossed because they don't make it past a regular employees chain of command.

When I worked at DOI they had a program called "Campfire" when Bruce Babbitt was Secretary. If an employee wrote "campfire" on their sealed letter, then it went directly to the Secretary and was opened by him directly. I did this to bring to the Sec. attention a situation that was occurring that was not consistent with our scientific practices. I heard later on that it got addressed AND I got a handwritten note back. I still have that note 20+ years later and I still remember the feeling of empowerment it gave me.

greater use of tablets and smart phones, esp. for field activities. I don't know if IT can ever be more efficient because of all the firewall restrictions we have.

I think this is already been done successfully and to a great degree.

See question 3. I don't think EPA needs to reinvent the wheel--just mimic those private sector companies that are leaders in whatever category EPA is interested in improving.

Getting contract task orders awarded has become incredibly arduous and, in some cases, impossible over the last 2 years. Contracting officers in OAM are constantly changing the rules and requirements for those of us who are CORs, even to the point of suggesting we write justifications in a way that is illegal because it would make their job easier. All this inconsistency has led to incredible delays of funding that threaten to leave money on the table and prevent us from implementing our programs.

State, local, and tribal communities depend on EPA to provide funding, technical assistance, and information-sharing to help them achieve better environmental results. At the federal level, we have expertise and a broader view than those who work on environmental issues at the state, local, or tribal level.

For example, many cities and towns have only one employee who handles all public health and environmental issues. That employee is usually very busy and may not have time to research the best way to achieve water quality improvements. This is an example of where water quality experts from EPA can provide information about the best practices learned from communities across the nation that this employee (and thus, this community) would not have otherwise known. Our constituents can benefit from that knowledge if we are able to share it with them.

Being able to communicate freely with states, tribes, local communities, and the public at large via the Agency's website and social media accounts is very important. Those are our main avenues to get information out to the public about the work the Agency does to fulfill our mission to protect human health and the environment.

Customer service in this case depends on two things: who is the Agency's "customer" and what does that customer NEED (not want)? First, as with every other federal Agency, EPA's customer is the American public. Not a particular portion of that population, but the entire population. Second, EPA is charged with protecting human health and the environment, which is what the American public NEEDS (and usually wants). Some portions of our customers want economic protection or place other values above the Agency's mission, however, EPA is statutorily required to first and foremost protect human health and the environment.

We as an agency are truly providing the best customer service to our constituents when we freely provide information about how the American public can take actions to protect itself and our shared environment.

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We continue to be required to collect "EJ" information for the Case Conclusion Data System (CCDS) forms for our enforcement matters. I have never understood why this information was necessary or what anyone did with it. In contrast, it's helpful and necessary to know the quantifiable aspects of our work--e.g., how many tons of pollutants are cleaned up, how much of what the taxpayers spent has been recovered--the original purpose of this form in the pre-Lisa Jackson days.

I also believe EPA's concurrence practice is unwieldy and time-consuming, and, with up to a dozen people on some concurrence chains and folks working flexiplace, the process takes way too long.

Webforms needs to be replaced with something that works. We used to use PeoplePlus for 182s (training forms) but someone had a "bright idea" to use Webforms - an old antiquated system. Webforms doesn't work for a lot of the things we have to use it for, including PRs. We just can't get new updates anymore. FPPS/WTTS need to be replaced with a more modern program. This one is more archaic than Webforms. It still uses a DOS environment. I thought we got away from DOS a long time ago. All of our personnel-type programs and systems could use an overhaul.

More communication with these parties is the best way of achieving better environmental results. I have always found that reaching out to and meeting with states, local communities, and the private sector is extremely productive. Our best assets are our people (scientists, engineers, experts), who typically want to cooperate with these other interested parties (and they with us) to help facilitate cleanups that benefit all. These "outside" parties invariably

Not my area of expertise.

To build on what I said in response to #2, the vast majority of these parties want a clean environment and want to do the right thing. Having a place at the table gives them a real sense that their views are being considered too.

Be nicer and stop speaking from both sides of our mouths.

We should have better management on the local office level, perhaps even desk audits of workers who are not hardworking or productive, but collecting a nice pay check.

Reduce the size of EPA HQ. Most of the cleanup work and enforcement occurs in the Regions.

Not my area of expertise.

I recommend that the concurrence process I mentioned in response to #1 be done via email. EPA would save countless days throughout the year if this happened. Faster concurrence often means cleanups happen sooner.

Our existing processes need to be replaced with more modern processes/programs.

To the extent it isn't already being done, we should be coordinating well with all the states in their delegated water, air, and RCRA programs. We should be cooperating fully with the states in coordinating any voluntary cleanups under their hazardous site cleanup statutes, so that there are no lingering and surprise federal issues that could get in the way of Brownfields redevelopment.

Not my area of expertise.

Not my area of expertise.

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The contracting, fiscal, and funding processes have many challenges. The delays are unacceptable. The decisions are inconsistent. The delays cause increased cost to the agency and disrupt the ability of programs to function efficiently and effectively.

Establishing clear expectations in writing among all collaborators at the onset of projects, including identifying the primary points of contacts and individuals responsible for the data collection efforts, clearly defining the types of information and data needed to support the decisions and conclusions that will be inferred from the information collected, involve subject matter experts during the planning stage to ensure the information and data that will be collected is comprehensive to support the decisions and conclusions, and ensure that the planning and information/data collection effort is documented to defend decisions and conclusions.

Increase support for EPA's voluntary partnerships programs that work with states, tribes, local communities, or the private sector.

Clearly define the expectations of each customer and involve the customer in defining the expectations, determine how the agency will meet those expectations, and evaluate if those expectations are being met through feedback from the customer.

Implement lean techniques at the department level, establish time baselines for current routine processes (from start to completion of each activity/task performed to complete the process, including administrative and technical processes), identify the activities/tasks with the greatest lead times, and evaluate if those activities/tasks can be streamlined be more efficient. Clearly identify constraints and perceived issues and address the constraints and issues.

Improvements to our internal fiscal, contracting, and funding processes. The current delays and inconsistencies greatly increase costs to the agency.

Consider evaluating the existing internal processes for efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability, then determine whether or not a new process/layer needs to be added to the current process to achieve those objectives.

The agency needs to engage the other agencies and states to identify and better understand their needs to determine how the agency can support those needs and what actions should be taken to address those needs.

Lean is very effective in streamlining processes to help organizations be more efficient and effective, but needs to be executed and implemented from a big picture 50,000 ft perspective. Bringing in external lean experts to lead efforts should be considered, and the external lean experts will need full senior management support at all levels to be successful.

Performance-based metrics and accountability for internal administrative and fiscal functions.

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Work to move the entire Agency to electronic concurrence/signature and filing systems. We are now using both paper and electronic methods to obtain concurrence and signatures on documents and in our records storage practices which is wasteful and environmentally unwise.

Eliminate the recently established requirement for non-funded Purchase Requests to track and document contracting activities for which no funding is required. This is bureaucracy at its worst.

Production of formal audited financial reports for the FIFRA, PRIA and eManifest. Although required by statute these reports have effectively zero interest on the part of external or internal stakeholders. The reports are expensive to produce and are expensive to audit. A legislative change is required.

The Region 8 Superfund program has wonderful working relationships with our state partners. Many of our sites are conducted State Lead with EPA in a support role. We would love to see the new Administrator and his Deputy come out to the Region and meet personally with the various state leaders involved in the Superfund program to find out first hand how this works.

EPA should become a center of excellence for the entire government for producing cost recovery packages to support litigation. Justice Department attorneys involved with litigation consider EPA the Federal government's "gold standard" for producing cost recovery packages.

Increased focus on and use of Alternative Dispute Resolution and community involvement tools would be of great benefit to our local, state and tribal partners. The public would experience a greater level of engagement and support if this were to happen.

See 2.

End the wasteful practice of sweeping funding at the end of each fiscal year. This long time practice forces federal agencies to spend funds in the last months of each fiscal year that might not otherwise be spent, which is wasteful. The ability to roll funds over from one year to another, with limitations of course, would be good for the government and good for taxpayers as well.

Eliminate conference reporting requirements.

Our IT support is poor. We need to find a way to hire truly qualified individuals to provide IT leadership and support services to the Agency. Being able to use available technologies starts with having IT management and staff that are experts and fully capable of using these tools themselves before the Agency attempts rolling out or implementing the use of new technologies.

Modernize our cost recovery system (SCORPIOS) and make it available government wide.

I don't honestly know.

see 7.

Move the entire Agency fully into the use of Lean process improvement tools and leadership techniques. Region 7 is the national leader in this area for EPA. Spending time in that region and learning how they have accomplished what they have in making theirs a true learning organization that understands, embraces and uses Lean practices every day of the week would be tremendously beneficial.

Thank you for asking these questions and providing us an opportunity to share our thoughts and ideas with you.

Move financial operations to one of the four designated government wide financial shared service providers. EPA is too small to achieve needed economies of scale to run basic financial operations.

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The following addresses People Plus: Leave is still not populating automatically as it's supposed to once approved. That needs to be fixed. People Plus does not allow one to withdraw or cancel a request for leave. That should be fixed. One cannot move one's CWS day in People Plus once approved. Instead, one needs to request an administrative assistant to do so. This is inefficient and should be addressed. Lastly, the Superfund site charging system in People Plus is antiquated and difficult to navigate and to add sites to one's "favorites." Also, one cannot add a Superfund site charging action code without requesting it be added by the administrators, which is very inefficient. That option should be a given for every site charging action code. The Superfund site charging system in People Plus should be fixed to make it easier to search for and add a Superfund site and its action codes to one's "favorites."

With respect to enforcement-related decisions, there are too many layers of concurrence needed for the issuance or approval of certain documents, such as negotiated consent decrees. This should be explored further to reduce the number of layers of concurrence within a regional office. This should be explored further.

Also with respect to enforcement, electronic concurrence should be developed further. There have been instances of hardcopy paper files being lost in the process of concurrence when handed from one office or branch to another. Electronic concurrence, when working in Lotus Notes, not only eliminates the risk of loss but also speeds up the process. However, the Lotus Notes-based electronic concurrence system is cumbersome and confusing, and often does not work properly.

Needs:

- 1) Electronic records database with OCR for all programs
- 2) Fully functioning databases for all programs that are utilized nationally amongst all similar programs
- 3) Automation of letter creation that includes all respective attachments
- 4) Regularly updated computers to minimize freezing up

With respect to enforcement, partner with states, tribes, local responders and the regulated community to offer workshops and training as a means to aid in response and compliance. Also, encourage states to partner as co-plaintiffs with EPA/DOJ during judicial civil penalty enforcement cases. Usually, such joint enforcement can lead to negotiated settlements that allows for not only the payment of civil penalties for state coffers but also supplemental environmental projects that benefit state and local communities, colleges and responders.

EPA needs more staff and resources to improve its ability to provide better customer service to states, tribes, local communities, the regulated community and the public at large. Years of spending cuts have jeopardized EPA's ability to perform its mission of protecting human health and welfare and the environment and providing better customer service to the public.

EPA should post as much publicly releasable information as possible online, including validated sampling data, Administrative Orders on Consent and Consent Decrees, Unilateral Administrative Orders, Administrative Consent Agreements and Final Orders, RJO decisions, etc. This would cut down significantly on FOIA requests from the public and regulated community, thereby reducing agency resources and the time-intensive work from staff necessary to respond to FOIA requests. More importantly, it would enhance agency transparency and provide a valuable benefit to the public, including the regulated community, who would often otherwise be forced to submit sometimes costly and unnecessary FOIA requests.

Please see my response to Question 3, above.

With respect to judicial referrals, having a handful of attorneys specifically designated as Special Assistant U.S. Attorneys (SAUSA's) could help avoid the delay and downtime often experienced after a referral. This would also help especially with emergency referrals.

Superfund cost accounting needs modernizing to not only quickly determine past costs already incurred for a particular Superfund site but to also account for costs already paid. Often, a Superfund summary cost report of site past costs does not account for costs already reimbursed, thereby showing an inaccurate balance. Modernizing accounting software to address this would help provide more accurate cost reports and reduce wasted resources in having to search for reimbursed costs for a more corrected balance.

There is a need to explore, perhaps in conjunction with DOJ, existing "legal/litigation hold" software that can be used to quickly and efficiently capture relevant documents from e-mails, network drives, C: drives, etc. for purposes of FOIA response and e-discovery/production efforts.

See answer to question 1

EPA has the experience and expertise in CWA/OPA civil penalty enforcement that the USCG may lack. Allow the USCG to continue as lead for cost recovery on taxpayer-funded oil spill responses while allowing the EPA to take over as lead for enforcement on civil penalties for all oil spills, both onshore and off-shore.

I am unable to produce good news stories or tweets from my office, because when they are submitted to the communications department higher up the chain, they die in a bottleneck somewhere. This has only been a problem since the transition. So perhaps ask the communications team how they did things before the transition and re-adopt some of those practices.

Money.

Or miracles.

Perhaps not having an entire agency of dedicated public servants watch their work collect dust, die in other offices, be undone, and then be given a meager attempt at morale building through profiles of our colleagues would inspire us to provide better customer service.

The EPA has undergone budget cuts every year since I started working at the Agency. We have been working to find ways to be more efficient and save costs for years now. This question is like a track coach repeatedly dropping a cinderblock on your foot and then asking you how you think you could run faster.

The Agency needs more money, not less, if it is going to be more efficient. Then it could tap contractor support to modernize or speed things up. At this point, the only thing that will come of continuing to press staff to find new ways to become more efficient and do more with less is worsening morale.

Since the existing technologies are already not being used to make the agency more accountable, there is no point in seeking out new ones. If the communications department would actually release tweets or press releases that showcased accomplishments, this question might be worthwhile.

Many of the administrator's authorities cannot be delegated to other agencies or states, so regardless of mutual interests, final responsibilities still lie with the Agency. The states rely on grants from EPA or from their tax bases to pay for environmental work. With less money to be distributed, they also are being asked to do more with less as well.

Perhaps we should pray.

Even if there were practices that could be considered best in class, I'm pretty sure that the current political opinion would be that the Agency is actually trying to ruin businesses and put people out of work, with no regard for new jobs or technologies that are being developed.

Several years ago EPA migrated to a Shared Service Center (SSC) model for hiring and most other human resources functions. This model should be re-evaluated. Although it seems obvious that efficiencies and associated cost savings should have been achieved by consolidating this expertise, that has not been the result. Hiring is taking longer than ever and SSCs struggle to provide an acceptable level of service to the Regions they support. This SSC model also seems to fall apart when there are other organizations involved, in particular the Personnel Security Branch (PSB). It is not uncommon for actions to be stuck between our SSC and PSB for months. The Director who is responsible for our SSC is not held accountable for its poor performance. The concept of SSCs should be revisited. In addition, the hiring process would significantly benefit from a LEAN exercise, which would clearly identify roles, responsibilities and turnaround times so that SSC employees could be held accountable.

The ability for managers to take adverse personnel actions for performance or conduct issues needs to be supported by senior leadership. An inordinate amount of supervisor time is spent on documenting poor performance or conduct, only to be told not to follow through because the agency wants to avoid receiving a grievance or other adverse action. Just like any large organization, there are perpetually poor performers at EPA that should be let go.

Our Region has excellent relationships with our state and tribal partners. We also expend a large amount of resources to work effectively with affected local communities and the regulated community. Everyone would benefit from better environmental results, and perhaps a cost savings, if we could expedite project schedules, but this is something that the regulated community is not always interested in or would support.

We have been a shrinking organization for many years and many efficiencies have already been put in place. Reducing our real estate footprint within the Regions would reduce costs. Some Regions have a physical presence in all of their states and that is not needed. Consolidating laboratories will also reduce costs. Consolidating libraries into a single library at HQ with virtual libraries in the Regions seems like an obvious cost savings.

EPA has many old software tools that are not just out of date, but archaic, such as WTTS, FPPS, Maxiflex, PP+, etc. EPA also has a bad habit of trying to design and develop its own software programs rather than purchasing proven systems from the private sector. I am sure these decisions were made because it was initially believed that building our own would be less expensive, but this calculation didn't take into account maintenance and the increased time it takes employees to navigate through systems that are not only slow but often do not communicate with other systems thereby requiring duplication of effort.

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1. EPA significantly reduced the contracts staff. This causes excessive delays in simple procurements. These delays adversely affect meeting the needed environmental outcomes. Increasing the micropurchase individual threshold and monthly threshold for purchase card holders will reduce the number of transactions that need to be processed by the contracts staff.

2. The requirement to create and process a TA for travel exceeding 50 miles is archaic. This should be at least doubled to 100 miles to reduce wasted staff time and processing costs.

3. Reinstate Level of Effort contracts to provide staff with the flexibility to adjust to uncertain outcomes within the defined scope. FFP and IDIQ are appropriate tools for situations where there is a reasonably high level of confidence in the outcome (e.g., purchasing goods) but not when the situation is uncertain (e.g., nearly all field operations).

We are a very hierarchical organization. A flatter style of management would make us much more efficient.

Teleworking should be pushed. Doing so means less costs associated with renting office space. We have the capability through Skype, AdobeConnect and SharePoint to work remotely and still interact with coworkers and it reduces employee costs associated with coming into the office. Working remotely is also better for the environment: less air pollution.

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High-level political appointees and managers who do not believe in core environmental science and laws prevent EPA employees from doing their jobs efficiently and effectively. The open hostility and subversive hostility that we have experienced since January is intimidating and bewildering, and inclines long-time EPA lawyers, scientists, and economists to not trust these appointees. It is wholly demoralizing to work for an Administrator who has made it his career goal to undermine and dismantle the EPA. From his interview at CPAC to his cherry-picked public appearances with white men at fossil fuel companies to his bizarre social media presence that ignores the actual environment, Administrator Pruitt stuns EPA staff daily with his out-of-touch approach to minimizing environmental protection and awareness and maximizing corporate cronyism. We cannot perform our jobs efficiently and effectively if our leadership touts an elementary and subversive "Back2Basics" mantra that sidelines environmental science and law. It saddens us to have to see this message every time we walk into an EPA building before one has even begun work, one is reminded that one's boss does not believe in the core EPA work.

There is a glaring omission from this list: environmental groups. Environmental groups and concerned citizens have long been a bedrock stakeholder group for environmental progress, and it is shameful that this administration has thus far ignored their voices ??? obviously, by never mentioning them in the roll of stakeholders that this administration recognizes. Instead of viewing environmental groups and citizen groups as a threat, at least acknowledge that these groups are an important piece of the whole stakeholder picture. We can achieve better environmental results by trusting NGOs??? environmental monitoring data and by not wholesale dismissing highly qualified and objective scientists from the Board of Scientific Counselors. This administration has also never mentioned childrens??? health advocates as a stakeholder, and has already taken actions that will negatively affect childrens??? health. EPA can achieve better partnership results if EPA is credible, balanced, and believable. EPA does not project a credible, balanced, and believable image when the press office allows conflicting messages to be tweeted. When I read EPA???'s Twitter feed, I feel like I am getting dystopian whiplash. To wit:

April 28: @EPAScottPruitt told @FoxNews that the Paris Climate Agreement is a bad business deal for this country. (This, incidentally, is a completely unreasonable position for an EPA Administrator to hold).

April 28: Thanks to the DC Circuit???'s decision today, we???ll be able to proceed with @POTUS???'s executive order and review the Clean Power Plan.

May 2: It???'s World Asthma Day! What are you doing to manage your environmental asthma triggers?

This is laughably obtuse. It is a shame that the people in the Office of Public Affairs have to tweet this material. I imagine that people suffering from asthma and the air pollution increased by climate change and coal-fired power plant emissions are doing all they can to manage their ???environmental asthma triggers,???' but EPA is willfully pulling back air and public health protections that the world is counting on EPA to uphold. You cannot possibly miss the irony of these strange successive tweets.

Establish a credible and accurate social media presence that promotes protecting public health and the environment. Demonstrate that you value the work of women, people of color (conspicuously absent from this new staff thus far), and environmental professionals in general. Ensure that you also plan to provide better customer service to environmental justice communities, environmental advocates, and childrens??? health advocates. Stop having public appearances where the only photographs taken with the Administrator are with white males from the agricultural or fossil fuel extraction sectors.

Require offices within EPA to buy IT through OEI. If we have one central office buying all IT equipment, we can save a significant amount of money. We can also ensure everyone is compliant with all of the rules and regulations. When other offices buy IT hosting, etc...., they are not always compliant with all rules and regs.

Bring back the Greenspark Challenge, a highly popular and successful program.

But more broadly, there is an untapped opportunity for the new administration to cease its hostility towards science, law, and staff so that EPA can function, as it has, as a steward for protecting public health and the environment.

Require offices within EPA to buy IT through OEI. If we have one central office buying all IT equipment, we can save a significant amount of money. We can also ensure everyone is compliant with all of the rules and regulations. When other offices buy IT hosting, etc...., they are not always compliant with all rules and regs.

Twitter, Facebook, and other social media platforms can be used very effectively, particularly in ways that do not constantly provide prima facie evidence that the new administration only promotes the interests of white males engaged in fossil fuel-based industries or industrial agriculture.

Work with other agencies on IT to make more central buys.

Putting aside that this is a bizarrely phrased survey question, it would help to see a more visible presence of new administration officials who value environmental justice, children's health, tribal environmental protection, and citizen participation. Thus far, it seems that the new administration would find it acceptable to decrease or eliminate such programs, and the agency has not paid any public attention to these issues since assuming office. That is incredibly troubling.

Best practices include following the legal advice of highly trained and experienced attorneys. Best practices also include conducting rulemakings in a way that the scientific and legal records support, not in ways that run counter to administrative law and scientific data. Additionally, it is a best practice to have EPA leaders who believe that climate change is real and it is also a best practice to advocate for and allocate sufficient funding for studying the scientific and economic effects of climate change. Best practices include ensuring that the Board of Science Counselors and the Scientific Advisory Board are populated by the most highly qualified academic scientists and not by industrial representatives. Finally, best practices include trusting seasoned EPA scientists, attorneys, and economists, getting to know them, and not intimidating them or eliminating their jobs.

There should be wider access for staff to agency mobile devices. In this fast-paced, modern world it is difficult to keep up with communications and scheduling without a mobile device. Emails are seen too late, meetings are missed, and communications are generally hindered when staff is not able to be connected unless they are at their desk. (Even just for use elsewhere within the building, mobile devices offer great gains in effectiveness and efficiency.)

Alternatively, we could change the settings on our email system to allow it to be accessed from mobile browsers. Before EPA switched to Microsoft email services, staff could at least check their EPA email on their personal device (in the cloud via a mobile browser, not downloading anything or otherwise raising records concerns). As this is no longer possible, staff members are disconnected any time they step away from their desk.

(1) Re-examine the need for so many administrative and support personnel, given advances in technology.

- (1) Co-locate some EPA Regional staff with appropriate State, tribal and local environmental programs, as the Agency reduces its footprint and works to strengthen federalism (capabilities at lower levels of government).
- (2) Establish EPA pilot program which would enable employees, especially those near retirement eligibility agreements, to establish 1-2 year "exit" agreements under which they would assist (and perhaps collocate with) a state, local, territorial, tribal or other governmental entity or association to (a) advance innovative approaches to environmental protection, consistent with the Administrator's "Back to Basics" agenda or other Trump Administration objectives) at these other levels of government or (b) otherwise assist these entities improve and administer environmental programs.

- (1) Identify, fund and establish innovative state-based compliance and enforcement programs, utilizing emerging electronic monitoring and reporting technologies (and building upon some existing state initiatives), including those which more fully empower the public.
- (2) Utilize drones, especially in emergency response and, as do other federal agencies, in compliance monitoring.

(1) Explore transparency options for holding federal agencies more accountable to the public for their Superfund and other facility cleanups.

(1) Encourage and enable all EPA employees, as part of routine Agency responsibilities, to establish occasional but regular(a) "stretch" assignments and (b) full-time details in other Agency offices with priority missions to widen their professional experience, to improve morale, and to more broadly benefit the EPA from their expertise.

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The main issue that our agency has is that low performing employees are not held accountable for their work. Managers rely on high performers to do all the work and don't address the problem. Managers should create a plan to help develop non performers potential and if they still don't want to work, then they have to leave the agency. Many managers within our agency don't take the time to learn what their employees responsibilities are. A lot of time is wasted explaining your duties to supervisors again and again.

Better communication is necessary on all parts. Communication with all partners should be open and shouldn't be limited to one employee. Stop redundant work.

EPA employees need to understand the mission of the EPA and the fact that they are public servants. Employees are treated individually and not as an organization, so most employees are looking out for their personal interest, not the EPA mission. Create a more inviting and friendly organization where employees can work together for a common goal.

Salaries are too high for many employees. The main focus of many EPA employees is how to get to the next GS, not the protection of the environment and human health. A lot of decisions, projects and Science advancements occur when people are motivated to get to the next GS, once there, the work stops. Some salaries are too high for the amount of work the employee has. Create a plan to control salaries and allow a more integrated work place where employees share responsibilities and work together. Offer bonuses to the high performing employees. Right now, all employees receive bonuses regardless of amount and importance of work performed.

Consolidate office space and reduce operating expenses by further promoting telework.

Travel - most meetings are offered via web. Reduce travel cost by providing better ways for employees to participate locally.

We already have many of the technologies needed (e.g., SharePoint, One Drive, Skype for Business, One Note) that allow for seamless collaboration regardless of where a person is physically located. The Agency should focus on getting employees proficient in these existing technologies to enhance productivity.

Have regular meetings with partners to create a collaborative environment. Share ideas and distribute responsibilities accordingly.

The main item that comes to mind is cross training. It has been my experience that managers are not opened to cross training their employees. When a person is unexpectedly out of the office for a long period of time, there is no way to continue the services as usual. Telling a customer, "You need to wait until my return" shouldn't be acceptable. Another reason for cross training is that some employees are always busy, while others hardly have anything to do. It would be more cost effective for employees with a low workload to help the ones that have many pending items.

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Using outdated databases and data collection systems and paying tech contractors to develop unique systems that require long-term sole source maintenance. These unique sole source technologies eventually lead to dead ends and enormous amount of money spent on maintenance. Use off the shelf systems that can be upgraded and maintained by any market company that is widely used by the American population to ensure we hire well-trained new staff who can use the technology.

Data systems should be able to communicate with each other across agencies. The worst thing we can do is develop a systems that doesn't communicate/share data across agencies. We still use and develop "unique" systems that don't allow communications between states, tribes and local communities. We need to ensure all data sharing is transparent and viewable by the public.

EPA should not continue to invest in and maintain in-house boutique services that are infrequently used and can be provided more economically by private sector vendors. One example is the regional dive teams. Scuba diving is a highly specialized, high-risk service that the Agency should contract out to experienced, skilled professionals. The costs for training, equipment, vehicles (including boats and support vehicles), as well as the salary dollars and other expenses for training and travel, are too high to justify continuing to perform this service with in-house personnel. Some dive team members have claimed that scientific diving is their specialty, however many dive team members are not scientists or have no experience conducting field studies or scientific data collection.

Some of our tribes are so far behind the technology curve ball. Provide additional resources that will help them improve their technology and infrastructure, similar to what we did for our state environmental agencies.

We hire new staff who do not have a basic understanding of office technology and continue to use paper versus OneNote or online storage systems. Every new hire should know how to use MS 365 office systems if they want to work at EPA. Mandatory training for all staff on system upgrades and the use of O365 systems. An educated and well-trained employee can save valuable staff time and dollars.

Update our superfund database. It's antiquated. It doesn't communicate effectively with states, tribes, or local agencies systems and very user "unfriendly" and doesn't like to share. Require all new data follow a strict data set standards. We have everyone and their mother adding things into the national superfund database without any strict standards. Thus we are unable to view the data in any format due to the massive errors.

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There's too much administrative overhead on everything we do. Specific issues to address include:

- 1) Reduce the number of trainings we have to take,
- 2) Give us more IT privileges. Specifically, we (or certain trained users), should be able to modify sleep settings or install software (e.g. EPA software) on our computers without needing administrative privileges. We should be able to add EPA collaborators to shared folders without needing multiple approvals.
- 3) In general, reduce paperwork / number of signatures from different people required to do anything

View stakeholders not only as subjects of regulation but also as customers.

In the Office of Research and Development (ORD), we should have a strong communication channel so that these groups know how to leverage our capabilities. We have a lot of skills and resources in our workforce, but finding out how to work with us is very word-of-mouth. Internally, we do not even have a directory of researchers so that I could, for example, find someone with a particular skill set to help with a project. I can only ask around.

enhance description of processes and evaluation criteria

-

Increased documentation of work processes, evaluation criteria, ...etc.
Enhanced intra-EPA coordination

We need to hire more young people with the right skills for the current tasks. This would address many problems related to costs and inefficiencies.

There is no lack of ideas, but there is a lack of resources to implement ideas. Consider a one-time increase in resources to implement ideas.

There's a different system for everything - PeoplePlus, Employee Express, Webforms, SharePoint, Concur. It's hard to find out how to do anything from our intranet pages, I end up having to ask someone almost always. Our online info should be up-to-date, and admin systems streamlined or procedure eliminated.

Our technical practices should be documented such that any reasonably qualified party may be able to duplicate our work.

The software we use for research should be open source / open access unless there is no option for the application.

Multiple layers of management before reaching a decision maker severely hinders the time in which CERCLA decisions are made. I'm an attorney with a second law degree. But in order to reach a decision maker I have to brief up to my branch chief, then brief my division director, then office director level (and all of their deputies) before getting scheduled to brief the AA. This is a process that can take two months or more. Flattening the enforcement office management structure so that no attorney has to brief up more than once to someone who can make a decision is urgently needed for efficiency but also staff morale. If delegations of authority need to be revisited to delegate decision making further down, do it.

Eliminate the position of Regional Liaison. These attorney positions are essentially secretarial in nature and could be done by a trained paralegal to provide intake and referral to subject matter experts. Liaisons used to have funding to participate in case negotiations and settlements but at this point the position is essentially administrative.

There is no opportunity for staff to evaluate bad managers. I have personally witnessed bad managers deny career development opportunities to entire AAships because of FTE fears. I have seen managers hire up knowing they have payroll budget deficits that have had to be addressed by OCFO multiple fiscal years in a row. Staff urgently needs a means of providing political and senior leadership feedback on poor performing managers and executives in order that their performance can be addressed. Too often such poor management is passed along as poor performance reviews for staff when the problem is managers.

Elevating political blocks sooner. Technical challenges are one thing, but when political differences prevent agreement on long term solutions, particularly in CERCLA, these issues need to be raised to political leadership, both at the agency and on the Hill sooner.

Most importantly, tribal governments need to be given the same treatment as states in terms of authority and grants. Tribal sovereignty needs to be recognized and respected by political and career leadership.

Remove poor performing managers. I once witnessed management set up a facilitated discussion for staff after a poor EVS showing. The managers walked in as the conversation with the facilitator was about to begin, completely undermining the safe environment for feedback the managers were "attempting" to create.

One very simple idea to improve customer service is a tracking system that many retail sales outlets use. I work at a big box home improvement retailer on weekends (because of shitty government pay for attorneys). I have a weekly timer on my customer contacts with green, yellow and red indicating what needs to be followed up on. Inquiries from the public, from our regional clients, etc. could be inputted in a similar manner with requisite employee targets for responses. That way management has a tracking ability for workproduct/customer service and employees know what they are expected to address on a weekly basis in terms of customer service outcomes.

Flatten management and delegate authority lower to empower professional staff. I had more autonomy and authority on the Hill as a 23 year old Legislative Assistant than I do with two law degrees and 9 years of agency experience. I continually look to return to the Hill because my talents are wasted in a bureaucracy where I have to run everything through branch chief, deputy division director, division director, deputy officer director, office director, and AA. Decisions that could be made in hours take weeks or months. And they don't percolate to headquarters until they've been elevated through the same type of management chain at the regional level. Empower professional staff.

Create a Technology Implementation Administration. EPA shouldn't be bidding out an upgrade/update to it's constituent management service. That's a technology that could be shared across multiple agencies under a single contract.

Quit leasing computers. Purchasing computers is cheaper.

Attorneys in enforcement don't have smart phones.

Empower attorneys to record their time as they actually spend it. I was checking email last week while on Annual Leave in order to monitor several items. I did this routinely while serving in the Administrator's Office. My home office is refusing to credit me my time saying I should not be working while on Annual Leave. I'm a professional and I'm more than capable of accurately reporting my time. I was empowered in the Administrator's Office to do so, but in OECA I'm treated like a child. The real world doesn't work this way, neither should we. If I do government business for an hour or two a day while on vacation I should be able to report my time accurately.

Eliminate OSRE and move the enforcement attorneys into regional enforcement roles. Enforcement attorneys in headquarters cannot make good policy without having been in a primary enforcement role in the regional offices first. We simply do not have the experience nor the delegated authority to make enforcement policy. Either change the delegations to give us that authority and work experience or eliminate the positions/offices.

None. My office is a bureaucratic nightmare with no accountability for poor managers. The regional offices avoid coming to us because we are seen as an obstacle to settlement. I've had regional offices actively avoid filing general or special notice letters in order to avoid triggering policies that would require them to report on negotiations status to us. The region simply conducted the negotiations without filing notice until an agreement had been reached. OSRE is dysfunctional, beset by poor morale and needs top to bottom reform.

Station more EPA employees within State offices. It can be very effective in serving States better because 1. the EPA employee becomes much more intimately familiar with State regulations and policies, and 2. the State has an on-Site go-to person to answer questions about EPA regulation and policy and to relay concerns back to EPA.

Adopt a groundwater cleanup policy that allowed deletion of National Priorities List sites when groundwater that exceeds drinking water standards is located only on on-Site property and is naturally attenuating. Adopt a groundwater cleanup policy that differentiates between aquifers that are currently used for drinking water, planned for use as drinking water, or are in hydraulic connection to drinking water aquifers, and those that are not. For those that are not, use monitored natural attenuation as the default remedy unless that would endanger drinking water aquifers or surface water quality standards.

Research and development of more real-time monitoring devices for soils would be extremely useful and save money and time.

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EPA is not an agency that has ever really emphasized the importance of administration and those within the administrative community are usually not consulted whenever new, internal, rules are published for things such as purchase card processes, contracting actions, property management, etc. There is very little leadership in the administrative field because everyone is too focused on their individual work to see or care how administrative actions operate and impact people in offices other than their own, not to mention how much time is spent making purchasing decisions and getting the required approvals for a purchase before it can be done; we often spend hundreds of manpower dollars (sometimes more) to make a purchase that may only cost \$50, especially with FITARA approvals are required. It would be nice if there was an effort to establish some comprehensive, administrative SOPs to guide administrative processes, especially for lesser known topics such as inviting outside guests to EPA training, purchasing clothing for EPA employees, reimbursement for professional liability insurance, etc. It would be great, too, if EPA would have contracts training for non-CORs as a lot of folks who don't need to be CORs do have contracts responsibilities and they have no idea what they are doing or even how to prepare a simple purchase request. Also, EPA does not manage its payroll well. All too often, towards the end of a funding period (end of CR or EOY) payroll eats up our extramural funding that we're trying to spend and then we get stuck because the money is temporarily unavailable. This causes delays in ordering equipment, executing contracts, issuing grants, etc. and puts EPA funding at risk because we can't get it spent timely. If EPA had a better way of calculating payroll and keeping it balanced in the appropriate accounts, we wouldn't waste so much time just sitting around waiting for the funds to become available again to execute a request. Finally, there is effectively no property management at EPA. There are no check-in/check-out procedures for field equipment. Often equipment is usually left out laying around or in vehicles for anyone to take. Some inventory isn't even inventoried properly or tracked and there is no training available to staff on this topic. Of course, the biggest reason why any of these issues exist is because no one has ever cared enough to make it a priority. These administrative actions, however, are the number one place to look for efficiency, consolidation and cost savings.

In Superfund, the Contaminated Sediments Technical Advisory Group (CSTAG) and National Remedy Review Board (NRRB) provide recommendations on response actions to regional site teams. The regions are not obligated to follow those recommendations. It would be more efficient to make the recommendations mandatory. This would eliminate the generation of a regional response to the recommendations, saving time and resources. Stakeholders may prefer mandatory comments instead of advisory recommendations.

Communicate, communicate, communicate. However it is tough to keep on schedule every time resources are diverted to clarify misinformation circulating within the stakeholders.

Bring back the Superfund tax.

How about providing better customer service to each other, within EPA? All too often, calls are unreturned or people don't identify when they are out of the office for extended periods. Some people don't bother to answer their phones at all, ever; I have heard voice mail greetings that basically say - 'send me an email because I'm not going to call you back as I'm probably not even checking my voice mail.' We could save so much time and be so much more efficient if folks would just communicate effectively and timely.

Same as Q. 2. Speak the truth even if you might make people mad. We are not miracle workers. If we had unlimited resources we might be able to remediate sites to unlimited use unrestricted exposure.

See above. Also, too many resources go to supporting the unions - EPA employees should primarily work for the EPA.

Make electronic signatures standard for every process throughout the entire agency, period. There are actions, contracting ones especially, that require everything to be done on paper. This takes so much time and costs so much money to maintain paper records. The same is true for reports submitted to EPA by the regulated community. We should require all paperwork to be submitted electronically and not via binder after binder of printed material. (NARA is expensive! We pay way too much money just to warehouse paper records.)

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Acquisition and hiring processes require excessive levels of program office participation. There is no such thing as an easy purchase or hire, regardless of the hiring category or acquisition complexity (anything beyond the purchase card). Efforts require continuous monitoring and followup by program office staff and are subject to lengthy, unexplained delays.

Recently, there seems to be a push to allocate more responsibilities to the states (and fewer to EPA) without allocating the corresponding funds necessary to perform those tasks. Even now, it seems that some states are not able to meet their responsibilities due to constrained budgets, and adding more responsibilities would make it exceedingly difficult for them to perform their jobs properly. EPA's oversight, grants, and collaboration with the states is critical to ensure human health and the environment is protected. Therefore, I believe these programs and relationships should continue to be supported and funded as they have been in the past.

Regarding the private sector, I believe EPA needs to maintain its role as a fair and just regulatory agency. Recently, there have been instances where it seems EPA has prioritized the growth of business over environmental protection. I understand there needs to be a balance between these two concerns; however, as a scientific agency, we need to make sure we don't base our policies on business interests but instead go where our sound science leads us.

EPA has too many program offices providing enterprise IT hosting services.

No I do not. I believe our already constrained budget has forced us to reduce costs to the point that further reductions could potentially sacrifice the fulfillment of our mission. I personally perform the duties that, in past years, were performed by two full-time employees, so I feel that further cuts would be very detrimental to our mission of protecting human health and the environment.

Just quit talking about cloud computing until TIC compliance and continuous monitoring are mandatory components of FedRAMP. The costs of duplication exceed any potential savings. DHS and OMB have to fix this.

OMB's Data Center Optimization Initiative (DCOI) may result in long term efficiencies but has substantial upfront costs.

Lack of 360 management reviews.

Although by far not universal, too many managers who lack management skills in both identifying and addressing problems.

We promote supervisors to be manager and do not nurture potential managers resulting in some mid and higher level management positions occupied by those who can handle the administrative tasks but are unqualified to manage a program or an organization while overlooking those with strong potential management skills strictly because they do not want to walk away from their work to become a supervisor.

More integrated EPA /STL government research projects and analytical work. Both side have certain expertise and know their specific data. Combined we can leverage the best of all parties instead of relearning what someone else already knows.

Increase transparency of data limitation.

List potential techniques for users to identify data gaps

List potential techniques to address data gaps in analytical work involving specific EPA data collections.

Stronger EPA presence at State and local government conferences to educate attendees on what resources and support EPA has to offer.

Be it a fear, lack of knowledge, or legal limitations in working with congress to address "minor technicalities". A number of regulatory inefficiencies are tied to the governing statutes from congress especially when multiple statutes are involved. Some very basic items such as when a filing or submission by a facility is due to EPA, different definitions of terms such as a 'facility' between statutes.

Demotion or appropriate lateral shifts. When we promote good people to their level of incompetence we keep them there instead of moving them to a position which actually meets their skills.

We lack a system to identify and monitor potentially good ideas which were never well thought out. Managers who take credit for them continually spin the spin instead acknowledging the truth and bringing in the experts who knows how to trouble shoot and resolve problems.

One example is the egregiously duplicative, parallel processes staff are required to use for submitting regulatory/policy packages to the Administrator for signature. A regulatory signature package will usually consist of an Action Memorandum, the Federal Register document (which for certain types of rules can be several hundred pages long), and if economically significant under Executive Order 12866, the Economic Analysis/Regulatory Impact Analysis (which may also be several hundred pages long and are seldom actually read).

EPA staff must: (1) Prepare and submit to OP an original hard copy of these materials as well as a certain number of paper copies (the exact number of copies has fluctuated over time). (2) Send the package files in an email to OP to ensure that the requested package submission is captured as a record in the enterprise recordkeeping system. (3) Upload the files into and submit to OP using the ADP Tracker Lotus Notes database and use the database workflow to initiate electronic OP processing (not a recordkeeping system). (4) Upload the files into the Correspondence Management System (CMS), which is not utilized by OP at all in the signature process, to control the signature package to the OA Special Assistant and OEX.

If the Administrator's Office expects a program office to immediately turn a Federal Register package around for signature and prompt publication, this process duplication is bound to perpetuate disappointment in that regard. After signature, still *more* copies must be produced and certified to the Office of the Federal Register as true copies of the original. Related to Question 5 of this survey, I am pleased that OP is developing a single SharePoint-based replacement for ADP Tracker, and related FR Dailies and Congressional Review Act/CRA Lotus Notes databases. I am hopeful that this technology will help reduce some of the wastefulness built into this process. However, a broader consideration of EPA's enterprise IT systems is necessary to evaluate whether and how multiple record-related concerns can be best addressed in a streamlined process. Further, the OP's SharePoint-based replacement for the 3 legacy databases is conceptually able to support electronic signature. At an appropriate time, EPA should phase-in a requirement that all Federal Register documents be routed, signed and transmitted to the Office of the Federal Register (and, as applicable, to GAO and the Congress) electronically using a single system.

For as much consideration as federalism issues will receive, especially in the early days of the Trump Administration, I think addressing policy-level consultations should be considered under Question 3 of this survey. We *can* achieve better environmental results ??? and evaluate the performance of environmental regulations ??? by partnering states, tribes, local communities, or the private sector by sharing information and data that are of a substantially similar robustness. However, there are substantive statutory restrictions on gathering information that would allow the Agency to more effectively and efficiently assess baseline conditions and activities that factor into: (1) whether those conditions are indicative of more widespread, and potentially problematic, hazards/risks, (2) whether practices to manage those hazards/risks are effective and/or widely utilized, (3) whether EPA action of any sort is needed.

EPA has not been very successful in developing a mechanism for the routine collection of this information. To gather rely upon state local or tribal government partners to provide the information would be equally problematic (this would hit upon the same sort of Paperwork Reduction Act restrictions that would stall or altogether prevent EPA???'s direct collection of the information). In addition, the private sector has at times balked at this sort of information collection in the past as it has been seen as a precursor to additional regulation. Previous initiatives to both improve and to share EPA data have been linked to the success or limitations of partnership activities. In large measure, EPA???'s ability to truly enhance and measure the effectiveness of these partnerships will rely in great measure upon its ability to collect and share/disseminate information, and the Agency???'s ability to enhance the quality, integrity and utility of that information may depend on the existence of a political appetite to work with the Congress to make targeted improvements to the Paperwork Reduction Act.

With respect to EPA's Action [Regulation] Development Process

(<http://intranet.epa.gov/adplibrary/documents/adp09-24-15.pdf>) and consistent with the requirements of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and Clinton-era Executive Orders 13132 and 13175 the various rule-writing AA-ships are expected to involve affected/interested representatives of state, local, and tribal governments early in the process of developing an action in order to formulate and present rulemaking options that already take the concerns of those governments into account before presenting the options to Agency officials for a decision. To the extent that this occurs, I believe that the Agency does this well, and I believe that most of the intergovernmental associations would agree. Where things begin to unravel a bit for the Agency is in what, when, and how the Agency communicates with those representatives after the fact in a manner that does not erode the Agency's deliberative process protections.

More than 20 years after enactment, EPA does not have a *final* guidance document that advises rulewriters and managers as to how appropriately implement the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act. I repeat: More than 20 years after enactment, EPA does not have a *final* guidance document that advises rulewriters and managers as to how appropriately implement the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act. The Agency's interim guidance is available at <http://intranet.epa.gov/adplibrary/statutes/umra.htm>. This Administration may wish to review that document and direct related changes for the proper - and predictable - implementation of the Act.

EPA did develop a very good guidance document to help rulewriters and managers identify whether a regulation would have federalism implications - <http://intranet.epa.gov/adplibrary/documents/federalismguide11-00-08.pdf> - and the Agency generally adopted a \$25 million threshold to help managers and staff determine whether direct compliance costs to state and local governments are *substantial* under the terms of EO 13132. However, that guidance document provides very little insight to managers and staff about whether, when, and/or how to *continue* to consult with representatives of state and local governments after receiving initial feedback from representatives of state and local governments. EPA program offices can at times be called up to consult again - and at the last minute prior to issuing a proposal - a wild card that can be disruptive to agency planning. EPA can be roundly and heavily criticized for not re-engaging while also heeding calls to protect decisions and documentation about a forthcoming proposed or final rule from release under the Freedom of Information Act before it is announced in the Federal Register. The

Yes! EPA is at a unique moment in history as it is making decisions about how to implement various directives and mandates, both old and new. The Administrator's Office could consider establishing rigorous new management controls to (re-)enforce these Agency obligations. For example, consider section 3 of EO 13563. Some sectors and industries face a significant number of regulatory requirements, some of which may be redundant, inconsistent, or overlapping. Greater coordination across agencies could reduce these requirements, thus reducing costs and simplifying and harmonizing rules. In developing regulatory actions and identifying appropriate approaches, each agency shall attempt to promote such coordination, simplification, and harmonization. Each agency shall also seek to identify, as appropriate, means to achieve regulatory goals that are designed to promote innovation.

This still-effective Obama-era requirement upon agencies is toothless without executive-level emphasis here and at partner agencies, so executive-level dialogues may be necessary to effectively coordinate the administration of that requirement, but there are significant opportunities. EO 13563 could be used to justify at EPA a requirement for a more holistic assessment of the current regulatory landscape within EPA and at other federal agencies that occupy similar regulatory spaces and/or seek to effectively manage the same or similar environmental and/or human health risks at the early stages of regulatory development. If a new regulatory effort were deemed to be necessary, EPA and partner agencies may be able to use these assessments to identify companion regulatory changes including deregulatory ones that may be suitable for consideration under the 2-for-1 requirement presented in section 2(c) of EO 13771.

To illustrate the example, imagine that EPA has determined that certain uses of Chemical X poses an unreasonable risk of injury to health or the environment under the recently amended Toxic Substance Control Act. Under TSCA, EPA is obligated to take action to reduce the risk such that it would no longer be unreasonable. Options for such an action could include a partial or full ban on certain/all uses of the chemical. Other agencies, even other program offices at EPA, may have related health and environmental regulations on the books. If EPA determined that even a partial ban on the use of Chemical X was appropriate, EPA could also reconsider whether a related regulation for Chemical X under the Clean Air Act was still necessary, and/or whether a particular worker safety requirement under the Occupational Health and Safety Act for Chemical X could be modified or repealed. If EPA were to (partially) ban Chemical X, perhaps

Yes. Phase-in a requirement that EPA's Federal Register documents be signed electronically to streamline existing processes and reduce production-related waste.

No firm opinion. If realigning activities is meant to refer to a potential deference to actions by other agencies or states, they should at least receive an appropriate level of funding and technical assistance from EPA to take those actions on.

No firm opinion.

Multiple time keeping sheets, Currently we have two systems (People Soft and Lotus Notes MaxiFlex). Really one time sheet would suffice. Eliminate one time sheet (Lotus Notes Format).

EPA staff with oversight responsibility should be required to stay current with field sampling and analysis procedures. They should rotate in and out of field work teams and perform field studies along side the state, tribal or contractor staff. This gives the oversight personnel more credibility with partners.

Managers should be subject matter experts when dealing directly with states and tribes on different environmental media.

Bring back administrative staff to answer phones. New technology has left a large segment of the population behind who get tired of trying to navigate websites (many of which are out of date) or leaving messages. Often times, people would like to discuss their questions and/or issues with a real person with some basic knowledge of who they should refer them to.

Inefficiencies are largely the result of cost cutting without thought of the big picture. We are very short staffed in the field and analytical programs and most of us wear several hats. As technical staff, we also have to serve as their own travel agent, administrative staff, health and safety staff, janitorial staff, etc.... Also, the amount of online training we are required to take is out of hand. I think the tax payer interested in environmental results would be better served if I was able to devote more time to hand on environmental work and keeping my fingers on the pulse of the environment as opposed to managing excessive paperwork and redundant online training.

Not new. Administrative staff. It would be very helpful for data entry and paper work, responding to FOIAs, etc....

More and better managed travel resources allowing EPA scientists to attend conferences with scientists from other federal and state agencies. This is where a lot of good partnerships are formed. Also, more detail opportunities allowing staff to work in other agencies on a temporary basis would be beneficial.

Loosen the federal procurement rules. It takes too long and there is a lot of second guessing. Having to deal with buyers with no technical expertise who second guess the technical staff is very time consuming and counter productive. It would also be good to open us up to vendors like Craig's List or EBAY.

Processes within EPA need to be streamlined.

Meetings are important for ensuring that EPA is moving in a coordinated fashion. As such, we need to minimize the red-tape for holding conferences.

IT managers need to hold degrees in IT.

One of our biggest budget elements is IT yet we do not have folks that are experts in this area managing those programs.

Ensure that policy documents before 2005 are findable. with the change in email structure -- older documents have been lost and we will not be able to respond fully to FOIAs.

The WEB Drupel roll-out was poorly done and we still do not have access to all of our documents and neither do our stakeholders.

Need to determine if the way \$\$s are spent on computer systems make sense.

We need to learn from site such as Flint -- the people need to come first and not allow situations like Flint to fester. EPA has a role and needs to do its job. We need to work with the states but in the end it is EPA that is accountable or should be.

Need to identify priority pollutants and work with the states and tribes to make sure that we are protecting the people -- again look to Flint. Lead is the poster child for environmental exposure and we are using outdated information.

Need to issue updated MCLs for emerging priority pollutants -- e.g., lead, PFOAs, PFC, etc.

Lead -- Need an agency position on what blood lead level is protective - and suggest we go out with a FR notice seeking comment on this. Reuters report June 2016 says that many pediatricians are not testing children for lead so our data that lead levels are coming down is not reliable. Also in poorer areas with more lead based paint the levels are probably not coming down as much as other areas. Make lead this administrations shining star -- and do it in a transparent manner.

Need a better access channel for citizens to talk with our leaders. They should not have to work too hard to be heard by our management. By the time they often get in the door a lot of damage has already been done.

What happened at Flint -- why did it take so long? What will we do so that we don't have another Flint? What will we do when it happens again? We need checks and balances -- not red-tape, but ensuring that the important issues that affect our people are not ignored. What went wrong at Flint and where is our next Flint? That should be the question that is asked constantly.

We need to help industry comply with the laws -- more web based training, and more hand holding.

Do a better job of IT and ensuring that all documents are up on the web and are word searchable.

If we have data about portions of the country -- the citizens should have access to the data from our Web and should be able to manipulate the data

We need to do all of this more efficiently -- hire managers that understand IT and have degrees in the subject.

Also -- look at our bottom line before we pay for details to HQ. We have really good people at HQ that we should be developing and we don't incur the travel costs of a detail traveling and staying the DC area.

Show your EPA people that you believe in them -- make sure that the expert staff are involved in discussions at the highest levels of the Agency. Believe in your staff.

Make the most of the Web and IT -- do not run from it but embrace it. Data and the truth will ensure that we have credibility with the public. If things go bad -- own up to it. If we don't know -- own up to that. When we do something good or challenging, own up to that. The environment is the Space program for our citizens -- planet earth comes first.

Lead is an excellent example of a contaminants that needs attention by all parties involved. There are separate roles for each -- HUD for lead in poor housing, States for areas not covered by federal regulations, and EPA as the backstop enforcement our laws, working with all parties and industry, and helping to advance the science. We need to have the best science as to what is protective and then we all need to work together to lower the lead exposure in this country. We should view this like we did Space Exploration -- by the year XXX -- 99% of all children have a blood lead level below 2 ug/dl. This means we have to invest in science, technologies, outreach. It should in particular be 99% or greater of all children in our poorest neighborhoods have a low blood lead level-- not averaging them out across areas of more affluence. We need to establish the blood lead level that is protective and not use a range.

We have lost much of our clerical staff under the last administration. Administrative tasks such as filing, scanning, and records retention activities consume much of our time. We need to hire more administrative/clerical staff.

EPA should make resources available to convene and/or host partnering agencies and non-governmental interests to conduct dialogue that clearly established national standards and provides our partners the opportunity to identify success and road blocks. As an ongoing measure we need additional staff to coordinate and track state and local achievements.

We need additional staff. Under the past administration, our workforce has steadily declined, and we were continually asked to do more with less. We need additional staff to provide attention and foster trusting relationships with our partners that we serve.

With recent workforce reductions under the past administration, we have been unable to complete mandated activities which makes EPA vulnerable to 3rd party lawsuits. Our workforce is so greatly diminished that no one project receives the attention it deserves, so the workload as a whole stagnates. We have more work than workers, by increasing our workforce, we can avoid costly lawsuits and more efficiently complete critical assignments.

A full integration of National, State, and Local programs onto one common and transparent platform. Such a platform would identify all required fields to meet national standards and provide state and local governments the opportunity to expand the platform to represent all of their requirements and activities. Such a platform would make oversight more efficient, encourage more effective program implementation, and the complete transparency would improve accountability of both the regulating agencies and the regulated community.

We need to hire new personnel to serve as liaisons to partnering agencies at both the staff and executive levels. Such engagement can help to align efforts and priorities, and ensure reduced duplication of effort.

Here are three, fairly universal and standard, best practices for executive managers that are utilized at highly successful private companies across the globe:

1. Hire enough people to do the work that needs to be done.
2. Don't browbeat your dedicated workforce by piling on more and more work with fewer and fewer resources.
3. Don't threaten the livelihoods of your workforce with arbitrary workforce reductions.

They are pretty standard. Would be nice if they applied at EPA and all other federal agencies, since they don't apply today.

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Due to incompatible work tracking systems and also because EPA is under such a high level of scrutiny from Congress and some members of the public that do not share the values of environmental protection, employees are required to perform redundant work and time tracking management tasks that are time consuming. One time tracking system for leave, credit hours, site charging, travel comp time, and timekeeping should be utilized. Currently we must separately submit leave requests in People Plus, reenter leave hours in our People Plus timesheets, maintain and sign separate Excel spreadsheet forms for credit hours tracking, complete separate forms both before and after travel comp time is used, track telework site charging separately from in-office site charging, keep Outlook calendars updated, and update schedules in Lotus notes. This is a redundant administrative burden on employees.

PeoplePlus is due prior than the end of the week. For programs, such as Superfund, where we charge specifically to a site, this requires us to submit a timecard prior to Friday night. We always have to go back and amend the timecard, requiring additional time by staff, timekeepers, and managers. Change the process so we submit the timecard Friday night before we leave.

n/a

EPA needs adequate funding to continue and expand the important work done with states, tribes, and the private sector. FY2017 funding and staffing levels are inadequate to carry out the important work of EPA. Cutting both funding and staffing at all in FY2018 is unreasonable and irresponsible; cutting funding and staffing by 20%-30% or more is reckless. These environmental partners depend on grant funding, support, and guidance from EPA in order to complete their targeted work. These partners are necessary to collaborate with EPA, help fill staffing voids where EPA funds and staff cannot, obtain necessary location-specific information to work smarter, and employ a science-based, somewhat standardized approach to environmental matters at the ground-level.

By continuing to provide states, localities, and tribes with money, we can help them to achieve better environmental results.

EPA can provide better customer service to other agencies and the public with more qualified EPA staff. EPA currently operates at staffing levels from the 1980s, which is unsustainable. Hiring freezes should be lifted immediately and staffing levels should be increased to at least 18,000 - 20,000 EPA employees. More student interns should be hired and utilized to provide needed work experience to qualified scholars as well as needed, low-cost support to EPA offices. The proposed staff cuts to EPA are short-sighted and must not be implemented. EPA's budget is paltry in comparison to the U.S. defense budget, yet EPA's mission impacts every U.S. citizen every day. EPA employees implement the clean air, water, and community revitalization programs that are essential to all Americans.

Involve stakeholders early and often, and be transparent to the public throughout the entire process.

The first and most important way to reduce costs and inefficiencies at EPA is to remove the non-scientist, anti-environment Trump political appointee team in senior management. Obstructing science and undoing years of research and progress by instead pursuing ideological goals to undo environmental protection is abhorrent, and a misuse of public funds. EPA is a public agency rooted in environmental science and research; decisions on policy are based on peer reviewed research and the scientific method. The so-called "HONEST Act" is an insult to science, scientific progress, and a danger to Americans. Congress and the Administration's current appointees need to allow EPA to do the job of protecting human health and the environment. The untapped opportunities lie within the diverse, motivated, and intelligent EPA career staff that have dedicated their time to this agency and environmental protection. Trust EPA employees--they are performing a difficult job, with sub-par pay, and an unrelenting work ethic to serve the public.

n/a

No one at EPA should still be utilizing landline phones--especially jobs with the demanding work, travel, and meeting schedules of EPA. All EPA employees should be assigned a smart cell phone instead of a landline in order to be more responsive, efficient, and effective at performing our jobs.

n/a

There is no other Federal agency with the overarching, unbiased mission of the EPA. The EPA is the most renowned environmental organization in the U.S. and the world for a reason--the unique mission of EPA must remain intact in order to ensure that all Americans, regardless of State, territory, or income level, receive equitable environmental protection. EPA activities for the most part cannot be "realigned" to states because economic competition between states will unduly influence levels of environmental protection. State programs and grants must be administered and audited by EPA to ensure public dollars are being used responsibly. The vast majority of environmental disasters in the past 10 years in the U.S. can be attributed to lack of sufficient state oversight and action. State environmental programs are not adequately funded or appropriately staffed with qualified environmental professionals. Relegating environmental responsibilities to states is irresponsible. State environmental programs will continue to be short on funding and staff as they compete for needed funds in other state programs. Fifty different environmental programs in each state is incredibly inefficient, duplicative, and needlessly complicated and burdensome for any sort of commerce. Federal environmental oversight is essential to ensure a level playing field in the U.S., both for companies adhering to regulations and citizens protected by them.

n/a

The vapor intrusion working groups within EPA regional offices are top notch; the team effort to assess and determine the most practical yet protective way forward in this emerging field are essential to solving VI problems nationwide. Ideas from working groups should be periodically assessed in order to update work practices and regulations, and incorporate lessons learned and a level of proficiency and efficiency.

n/a

I have a concern with directives from management that we must consider factors that are unrelated to the statute being enforced or the exigencies of litigation when managing and resolving enforcement actions. The worst examples happen when the defendant or its industry are favored by the current administration. The solution is to stick to the basics-- return the defendant to compliance, deter future violations, and require the defendant to clean up, or if that's not possible, compensate for the damage it caused.

I honestly think that we already do a great job of partnering with states, tribes, and local communities. I'm in enforcement, and the nature of my work does not lend itself well to partnering with the regulated community. I've negotiated industry-wide enforcement agreements that required more cooperation than usual with the regulated community, but you still have to be aware that you are in an adversarial relationship with the other side or you risk serious ethical problems.

I have none.

The vast majority of employees at EPA are incredibly competent and hard working. However, even one or two incompetent employees, including managers, can gum up the works. I've seen several instances where everyone knew that a particular employee or manager was creating a problem, but it took years to address the situation. I'd like to see federal personnel rules revised to make it easier to both reward good employees and to remove bad ones.

Keep hardware and software as up to date as possible.

I think the current system works well with states and have no suggestions for changes. We've done a good job working with delegated states to get the job done, avoid duplication and provide assistance when needed.

We don't necessarily have over-lapping jurisdiction with other federal agencies, but we are often at the same facility at the same time addressing the same set of facts, albeit with different goals in mind. For example, there might be an explosion at a facility that resulted in a harmful release and employee injuries and both EPA and OSHA might be responding. While EPA is looking to address the environmental and public health problems and OSHA is looking to address the safety issues, it would be great if we could coordinate our efforts more closely. I'm sure the facility owner would like that as well. We constantly talk about cooperating more with other agencies, but it never seems to happen, mostly because agency employees are really busy dealing with their own responsibilities.

We meet with state environmental folks all the time and have a great relationship, for the most part, with them. A similar process of coordinating with other federal agencies might improve our relationships with them and the level of cooperation as well. The goal would be to figure out how we can help each other get the job done as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Lack of training resources. We are unable to attend professional conferences to hear from the regulated community what issues are out there and we are always behind the curve for awareness of new technologies.

Responding to citizen inquires within 24 hours of receiving them. Being there for the regulated community when they have questions or issues related to their situation.

For the Aircraft Drinking Water Rule, our EPA rules need to better align with the operational requirements of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Air carriers wrote their operational guidelines and maintenance requirements based on FAA and FDA requirements way before EPA even came out with the rule. EPA does not take into account how difficult it is to take a moving water system and conduct maintenance to it and how to address stored aircraft due to business reasons of the air carrier. Also, EPA staff had no training on an aircraft water system operates which is completely different than a water system with pipes in the ground. EPA needs to rely more on FAA and FDA for this.

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Superfund - many sites have special account monies which are designated to be spent on site activities. It takes too long to procure these funds and thus results in delays in implementing remedial activities. The process to utilize these special accounts should be streamlined. One way would be to simply allow whichever EPA Region where the special account site resides to handle and manage these accounts.

Superfund - 26 US Code 198 should be revised to allow sites on the National Priorities List (NPL) to deduct expenditures for remedial activities from taxes. Not allowing tax deductions for remediation expenditures on NPL sites does not provide any incentive for companies to cleanup sites. Allowing these kinds of tax deductions would also entice outside parties (e.g., developers) to consider performing remedial activities and thus cleanup NPL sites.

Uncertainty due to lack of senior level staffing.

Private sector - see above comment concerning 26 US Code 198

Commit to the mission. Provide adequate funding and maintain current staffing levels.

Question too broad to answer. I do not trust that senior level management have any interest in making EPA more effective or efficient, Actions from political leaders to date send the clear message that their only interest is in destroying the agency with glee and getting rid of employees.

1. Contracts ??? EPA???'s process and speed for reviewing and approving contracts and task orders needs substantial improvement. In recent years, the time needed for internal review and approval of contract paperwork has lengthened considerably, often causing unnecessary stop-work situations. OAM needs to have more warranted contracting officers on staff to handle the work and needs to have a customer-focused approach to work.

2.Hiring ??? the overall federal hiring process, as well as the internal EPA process, is slow and cumbersome. The existing system requires months and months of time and qualified candidates are often frustrated at the time and uncertainty involved. While hiring internal candidates among EPA offices is relatively fast, it typically takes 9 months to a year to bring in an external candidate. In demand labor categories (e.g., software programmers, engineers) are very hard to fill given the long time needed to apply, interview, make the certification, be approved, receive screening, etc.). Steps needed to be taken to speed up the process overall.

3.Management promotion obstacles ??? In 2016, OARM informed EPA offices that first-line supervisory positions (e.g., branch chiefs) must be filled with technical supervisors for any branch where one or more of the staff had a technical expertise (e.g., economist, engineer, scientist, etc.). This meant that staff in a non-technical labor category (e.g., environmental protection specialist, program analyst) would not be eligible to apply for that supervisory position. This decision, apparently to follow OPM policy, is nonsensical for an interdisciplinary agency like EPA. Many well-qualified people at EPA with advanced degrees from leading universities are classified as environmental protection specialists and have the management skills needed to supervise inter-disciplinary groups of staff. For example, in a group that develops cost-benefit analyses, it is common for engineers, scientists, lawyers, and economists all to work together and to cross-train across disciplines. This new policy is harmful to the long-term future of EPA and runs counter to leading management practices in large public and private sector organizations across the country.

Use EPA resources to provide greater national transparency to the public on environmental results from states and private sector - greater use of real-time monitoring tools, improved websites for public access to air and water quality information

Provide resources for states to participate in meetings with EPA and to participate in national conferences - many states, localities, and tribes have limited travel dollars

Improve customer-focused service ??? Some parts of EPA, such as OEI, OCFO, and OARM, tend to make decisions that affect the entire workforce without adequate input and feedback from the affected staff. These decisions include new software changes (e.g., People Plus) and new policies (e.g., on hiring or promotions) that affect everyone at EPA. Often, by the time the working level hears of the change, we are told that the decision has been made and that there is no opportunity to provide feedback or alter the direction. Instead of these arbitrary decisions, major changes should be piloted gradually, using tools like focus groups or surveys to gather useful feedback to improve the change.

Computer hardware and software improvements ??? In recent years, computer software changes have improved, although legacy software (such as Lotus Notes) continue to be used in some applications. It does appear to the staff that computer hardware purchasing and leasing decisions don't always provide the greatest value to the government. Laptop leasing contracts in particular appear to the staff to be over-priced, given the high cost of the annual lease and the long period of time between equipment upgrades.

Substantial improvements are needed in human resource management (particularly hiring) and contracts management to improve the time needed to hire new employees and to manage contract paperwork.

Added management initiatives have adversely impacted my ability to complete statutorily required EPA requirements. I have been adversely impacted by LEAN projects that will not reduce or eliminate any financial or staff time commitments. The LEAN initiatives appear to be an attempt to show efforts of reducing bureaucracy. However, a new bureaucratic kingdom has been created and no real analysis of results and the amount of resource time that has been spent on the projects have been completed. In addition, outside consultants are hired to shape inherently governmental functions without experience or background in the subject matter. This initiative is the latest in a long line of snake oil salesmen that will hopefully, very soon, go the way of the many "quick fixes" before it. Unfortunately, EPA will be left with a kingdom of highly paid individuals to gift back to the program areas to deal with.

Timely, direct responses from HQ on issues raised by the regions and states. Less reliance on guidance from HQ and more technical implementation assistance for the rules that they have written.

Electronic records. The ability to provide the public with an on-line tool to submit permit applications and research facility information would be helpful. If an electronic permit application tool was created that ensure that proper information was submitted, then permitting timelines would be reduced simply because the application could not be submitted without the proper technical information.

Reduce the amount of non-statutorily required "management" of media program areas.

Electronic file management systems

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N/A.

Having woefully unqualified leadership.

Placing program people in key locations where our stakeholders are located would be an invaluable approach to improving results, providing better service, and reducing costs. A small office could be established in strategic locations in each State to ensure that EPA staff, across all programs, are available. This approach would reduce costs by lessening the amount of high rent space in Regional hub cities and would reduce travel time and funding when working in those States where we currently don't have staff. This will also provide a direct link between States/Tribes/Communities/Private Parties which has been shown to be a tremendous benefit in the few locations where this is already being done.

Partner with state and private universities to research the vast number of chemicals in use, for the purpose of defining their health effects and properly managing the risks posed by such chemicals.

Not having woefully unqualified leadership.

See answer to Q2.

Not having woefully unqualified leadership.

See answer to Q2.

Not having woefully unqualified leadership.

See answer to Q2. Current communications technologies will allow for a more mobile EPA by moving staff out into all of our States.

Not having woefully unqualified leadership.

See answer to Q2.

Not having woefully unqualified leadership.

See answer to Q2. Region 10 is a good model to look at for this idea. Regions 3, 4, & 5 have multiple staff located in States to provide direct support. These Regions have all reported tremendous and cost efficient results by out-stationing staff.

Not having woefully unqualified leadership.

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Annual refresher trainings that cover the same materials year after year. There is no reason these could not be every three year trainings.

Training requests that have to go through one person in the management division, are time consuming and unnecessary. Streamline the process, my supervisor knows what classes I need and divisional staff know what funds are or more than likely not available.

Rethink any managers who aren't skillful at messaging/targeting audiences/communications in general. This is a critical skill in this day and age, to ensure we clearly articulate that "back to basics" does NOT mean disregard of environmental protection.

While we have moved to an electronic environment, there are still times it is necessary to meet with people face to face. The yearly concerns over travel budgets makes this next to impossible.

It's time to be more streamlined and strategic in how we partner with all these stakeholders. At this point, the communications between HQs and regions is so poor that this weakness "spills over" into how we support the states and others. Let's take a step back and get on the same page as an agency.

Open up to why things are happening. We are too concerned at times with deliberative issues and rather than working with all constituents we focus on one set, whether that is industry or environmental organizations. We have become a more politicized agency over the last few years and the early months of the new administration are showing that same trend.

Clearer, more consistent communications, focused on clear priorities (which have been missing over the last few years). This is an integral first step to many other critical sub-steps.

Consolidation of space. Hoteling or sharing of cubes as we move toward a more flexible workforce.

YES. However, mine are strictly from a regional communications standpoint- this includes rethinking all that we do; WHY we are doing it (please don't tell me again, people, that it's because "that's how we've always done it"), and stop being so reactive as communicators. We need to get IN FRONT of the message, not always trying to react to it.

We are finally moving in the right direction, however still lag behind the rest of the nation.

YES YES YES. But unfortunately, the comfort level with using Insta, FB, Twitter, etc that civil servants who populate the mgmt levels in communications is so low, and they are so unsure of how to approach this new world of social media, that the answer, when presented with a great idea to target a great message, is invariably, "No".

There are multiple agencies with environmental divisions. Some are in charge of cleaning their properties (DOD and DOE) and others have remnants of programs that have been kept over the years for political reasons. Of course as an EPA employee, I think they should come to us but it needs to be reviewed.

I feel like this question is basically the answer to the issue- we need to do MORE realignment of activities and shared responsibility. This way, the American citizen isn't left wondering "who are these people? EPA? the state? the locals? Who can I trust? And who can't I trust?"

Technical training/trainers in the program. Too often there is a set of trainers or coordinators in charge of training who are great for the non-technical trainings, but there is not enough of a emphasis on the technical. The ORCR training team has spent several months doing this - HQ contact is [REDACTED B6]

We should be incorporating accountability measures used in the private sector for our communications work. That way, less time is spent diddling around with "should we do this, should we do that" while worrying about getting "dinged" by headquarters, and more time is spent be strategic with messaging #backtobasics- and what that means and doesn't mean. It's also time to clean house. The folks who populate the upper echelons of communications have gotten there through seniority, not skill- this makes it very hard to get good ideas through. In private industry, accountability in reaching goals prevents this from happening to such a negative degree.

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none are unnecessary, using Lean to identify streamlining of identified processes is extremely valuable

Reengage with the Local Emergency Planning Committees at the federal level and provide additional federal grant funding for planning and exercises.

EPA and states get great results when we work in partnership - and these are facilitated by familiarity. The more we know about each others' goals, capabilities, and constraints, the more often we'll spot places where we can work together. Personal relationships really help, too. One idea: greatly increase the number of 1-2 year details between EPA and state environmental agencies. If a substantial percentage of EPA staff had state experience - and vice-versa - we'd have much more of a sense of common purpose.

A lot of people rely on EPA's website as a source of scientific information, and this should continue. As the new administration understandably changes policy material on the site to reflect its own views, it should leave the science intact unless there's good evidence that it's wrong. Otherwise, we look like we're politicizing science. To the extent the new administration's views are based on credible science that's not yet on the site, it should be added.

Employ Lean, increase its availability across the board to squeeze points in processes

National consistency is important, so some HQ coordination and oversight of regional work is essential - but there's currently too much. This creates great inefficiencies. Not only are many matters double-staffed (HQ and regional), but those staff sometimes spend considerable time resolving disagreements, which are often not issues of national consistency but simply personal views. Much HQ oversight should shift to the "audit" model, where regional work is spot-checked rather than continually supervised.

MeetingSphere is a valuable collaboration technology that has capabilities we do not currently have

Custom designed drones to replace existing aging technology (ASPECT and TAGA) for air sampling and situational awareness during large scale or remote emergency responses.

We need to find a way to get email on mobile devices - crazy that we can't do this in 2017.

payroll
acquisition and procurement

Using the National and Regional Response Team models in the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan, develop multi-agency coordination groups set in regulation or presidential directive. An example would be the interagency Alaska permitting group lead by DOI.

Joint strategic planning between Region 1 and the New England states has been tremendously useful as a way to set priorities, achieve better results, and build a stronger federal-state relationship.

The use of "Smart Cards" to operate our computers seems like security overkill and every morning and every subsequent log in throughout the day the requirement eats up a minute or two of potentially productive time. Recently I received a letter saying my photo needed updating. There was no deadline for having the photo updated and I ignored the request, expecting to be reminded. I never received any reminders and one morning I found that I was no longer able to log in to my computer. Learning that the problem was associated with the Smart Card and the fact that I'd ignored a single email from a month earlier, with no follow up reminders, took over an hour. Finally, the EPA Call Center CTS person turned off my Smart Card requirement for log-in for 30 days. There was no hesitation to turning it off. This action seems like good evidence that the Smart Card log in requirement is unnecessary and a waste of many EPA workers' time. I realize I've rolled a couple of complaints into one comment. My primary comment is to drop the use of Smart Cards for everyday log-in.

Study the impacts of rules on local communities more closely. Use demographic and economic data to better characterize workers and communities affected by proposed EPA regulations.

The opportunity for commenting on proposed rules and other requests for information is currently provided to all these entities. In my experience, all rulemaking workgroups work carefully and diligently through all these comments. Public listening sessions are also helpful and could perhaps be increased in number.

More electronic transmission of information. For example, converting the RCRA hazardous waste manifest to an electronic system would greatly improve efficiency. Relying on paper is antiquated, slow, and wastes resources.

In general, the EPA Call Center is too slow to respond. In addition, our lap tops are very old, very heavy and a chore to carry home on weekends. Finally, access to EPA email without my work laptop is cumbersome, slow, and difficult. Bringing home the laptop is important because of the poor accessibility to work email through home computers.

Perhaps coordinate on cross-government metrics such as the value of statistical life.

EPA could train employees to improve group interactions by encouraging all workgroup members to contribute their own talents and skills. I read recently that Google and Apple find that productivity is highest when groups function without harsh judgment when ideas are shared, and with intentional inclusivity of all participants including those reluctant to speak up.

One of administrative requirement that I feel reduces EPA employee's efficiency is entering our time into People Plus. In Region 5 we are required to enter our time by the Wednesday/Thursday before the end of the pay period. Being on the Maxiflex schedule the last day or two of my schedule is most likely going to change. When there is a correction to People Plus it wastes my time, the APA's Time and my supervisors time. If we were able to enter our time the Monday/Tuesday after the pay period, my time would rarely change and there would be no need to go back and adjust people plus. I estimate that I spend at least 10 minutes a pay period making the adjustments and making sure to notify my supervisor. With today's technology payroll should be able to turn things around a lot quicker and reduce the need for early time and attendance report. If they cannot we should look at a new vendor.

Funding is always an issue, but I feel it is the most consistent way to partner with our states. Absent federal funding, EPA needs to do a better job discussing the issues with state governors/legislatures. We rely a lot on the state???'s environmental programs to promote themselves. If we had a forum or the ability to discuss the benefits of our environmental programs with state governors/legislatures maybe this would help drum up additional financial support and help run better state programs.

One of my jobs is to write enforcement action notices to facilities that are out of compliance. I don't do a lot of them, but every time I write on I have to change the documents because it does not meet EPA's correspondence guidance. This can be really frustrating and time consuming as well as wasteful. My suggestion is that we create a division/Section that all they do is review letters and documents to make sure that they meet EPA's correspondence standard. Let the technical people draft the document, but have separate staff polish the documents for the public. This would save technical/supervisory staff time as well as reduce paper, by not having to redo the document so many times. I know we have this for larger documents, but we need something like this for the smaller letters as well.

As an inspector we should be using electronic tools to help conduct inspections. That would include using tablet or smart phones to enter the inspections. The information gathered can then be entered into the appropriate databases. Most of the states have taken advantage of these tools. This would allow us to be more consistent and save us time entering data.

One thing that I have noticed in our Region is that we allow staff to get away with work practices that would not be tolerated in any work environment. People have gotten away with sexual harassment, lying on their time cards, and are disrespectful to supervision. A similar issue is that the same people keep filing unfounded complaints against management and other employees. This wastes so much time and energy and should not be tolerated. When people get away with this what type of message is management sending. Apparently it is okay to do these things at EPA. EPA needs to implement a zero tolerance policy and stick to it. It is okay to file a complaint against management, but after the second or third unfounded complaint, the employee should be reprimanded. By tolerating these work ethics moral and faith in management continues to decline

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After being here over a dozen years and having experience in both other Agencies and the private sector, I can say this: There are thousands of ways we could improve the way EPA operates. Start with organizing the 10 regions consistently. 2 We don't need almost as many people at HQ as we have in the Regions, most of whom have no clue as to how things work in the field. 3 Our business processes aren't even defined. Everyone does what they want/learned how to do on their own. 4 There is no formalized training, not like I've had in the private sector or in the military. 5 There is no accountability. there are dozens of useless staff sitting around EVERY day and yet they remain on the payroll. The "useless idiots" (as deemed by mgmt.) do the majority of the work, usually getting no reward other than more work. 6 We contract out all of the real work, which costs us millions each year. With no truly standardized or defined processes, there's not much ground for one to declare the contractor's proposal invalid. They laugh all the way to the bank. Forget IGCEs, that's a joke. Most came from contractors originally and then get copied time and time again so there is legitimacy to those. 7 No one even seems to comprehend the concept of actually producing something. I can't tell you how many times I've heard that the outcome of some meeting (usually attended at fair expense by 30+ people) is to have a follow on meeting! This is just the tip of the iceberg!

How about we start with jointly defining the problem with all stakeholders, then working to devise a solution. There are dozens of examples I could give, but admittedly, while I STRONGLY support the current administration, I'm waiting to see if anything actually happens. Usually, all one gets for trying to improve something is at best abuse and more work; or in some cases, actual reprimands for things that never occurred. This is a very corrupt and dark place!

Begin by asking for their assistance. We have such an adversarial mindset here. During Katrina, it became readily apparent that our Response actions were used to generate Enforcement actions. No one wants us "snooping " around because they know it only means trouble. Instead of trying to demand that "we alone know what's best" maybe, just maybe, we could allow others to explain their position and develop practical solutions that allow businesses and industry to operate if not flourish, while keeping a reasonable approach to environmental stewardship

Yes, numerous ones. But these will only have a chance of occurring after you get rid of virtually every GS-14-15 and ESPECIALLY the SES workforce. They are overwhelmingly, the problem. Being lower graded, (which I'm not) doesn't mean you have all the ideas, but most chances for good ideas are going to come from those not so heavily invested in the status quo, or at least being made to support it , in order to survive.

1 You'll have to purge virtually everyone at OEI and RTP, especially the contractors. None of the technological programs work. Our software is junk and our processes are so horrific, when I relay these to colleagues in other areas, they laugh at me. Much more to add, but again, I'll believe in true change when I see it.

There are countless ways. I just floated an idea along these vary lines at a meeting at HQ in late March. Within minutes, over a dozen attendees cornered me and dressed me down for having such a stupid idea. I also got castigated for being to militaristic and as frequently occurs, "you're not an environmentalist, so you just don't understand." True enough, but I do happen to have a business degree and do very much understand this odd notion of cost/benefit analysis. However, at EPA, benefit isn't measured in economic efficiency, rather it's measured by how good it makes me feel....

I have seen nothing at EPA that would qualify as a "best practice" unless of course you had a category for making contractors wealthy. I have seen multiple practices at other Departments/Agencies and in private practice that would benefit us greatly. I'm tired of being beaten down for trying these.

717 5/8/2017

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We use smart cards and pin numbers to log into the EPA network. However, when using various applications, we have to use additional usernames and passwords. Single sign-on is suppose to take care of having to remember several usernames and passwords. However, each system has a different time range in which usernames and passwords expire and thus have to be changed. This results in frustration and time wasted. It seems apparent that once we are logged into the EPA system, we should not have to utilize additional usernames and passwords for any application under the EPA system. Therefore, the entire EPA computer system should be reconfigured such that once you log in with your smart card and pin number you should not have to utilize any other usernames and passwords.

1. Strengthen EPA's security program, in part by incorporating in OARM (1) the Administrator's protective detail (from OECA); (2) the Agency's new Insider Threat Program (from OHS and other EPA offices); (3) the intelligence function (from OHS), and perhaps other EPA security functions, as well.

1. Explore the consolidation of at least some EPA intelligence program components with similar program components in other non-Intelligence Community (non-IC) federal agencies to enhance performance and reduce costs.

Instead of eliminating the EPA's extramural research grants program, transform it. Make it work for State and Local governments. Make Washington work for America.

Long before the federal government was given a regulatory role in environmental protection, Congress established federal research programs to support environmental management efforts at the state and local scale. Making good environmental policy requires good science, but states and local governments do not have the resources or capacity to conduct research programs. They rely on the federal government to invest in research universities and small businesses to develop the knowledge, tools, and trained experts that they need to address their environmental challenges.

However, since EPA's extramural research grants program was established, it has been designed to emulate the National Science Foundation. Under this system, success is measured primarily by how many scientific publications are produced. Although this model has worked well to advance cutting edge research in a number of areas, it may not be the best model for supporting environmental management on the ground.

Over the years, several experiments have demonstrated how the research grants program could better connect with and support the efforts of States and communities. These include

- the National Center for Sustainable Water Infrastructure Modeling at the University of Texas, Austin
- green stormwater infrastructure studies in Philadelphia and communities around the Chesapeake Bay
- Air Quality Monitoring for Communities, conducting research in 6 communities across the country

We can build upon lessons learned from these experiments to transform the entire program. In all future solicitations, university researchers could be required to identify and work with at least one State agency, local government, or community organization. The researchers would be responsible for demonstrating how their research helps to inform or address the needs of this partner, in their proposals and in their progress reports. A portion of the budget in each project could also be set aside to communicate the lessons learned by the researchers and their State/Local partners to other States and communities around country.

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The requirements for submitting rulemakings and other federal actions to the federal register is incredibly inefficient and outdated. I don't know why the same function cannot occur through submitting Word and PDF documents.

The review process is overly burdensome (for me as a non-supervisor and my supervisor). It should be done as quick and as timely as submitting a rating for a car service (i.e., Lyft) ride.

Functional directory - our office no longer has a public information desk and callers sometimes are routed to me because I've been with the agency for 28 years. As many staff are retired and restructuring, a functional directory (regional, national, state, local) would be helpful to alleviate caller frustration.

Allow scientists to do their job. They should be able to set public health standards and it is up to the policy makers to design regulations to meet those standards. Incorporating "industry" into this calculus diminishes the effectiveness of the scientists, public health standards, and EPA. If you buy into the plight of industry, go work for Dept. of Commerce to address the real economic issues.

Development of rules (guides) for attaining goals instead of eliminating them. The guides help build capacity. We should be developing/implementing rules until someone else is able to take over. Eliminating rules without a replacement mechanism is chaos without limits, inefficient and short sighted. It doesn't help anyone.

This question implies we don't already do a good job. I don't see that -- so many of my colleagues pour their heart and soul into supporting tribes and consulting with states. We would be able to provide better "customer service" if the politically-appointed leadership would stop sending mixed messages about priorities and motives. We could provide better customer service if leadership set their agendas aside and provided support more broadly to staff -- allowing us to travel to meet with our state/ tribal counterparts and investing in technology that enables improved communications.

Avoid voice mail jail, we should have public lines answered during operating hours.

The hubris of this new administration exacts an enormous cost on the agency. A narrow election win should not cause such upheaval. The amount of time spent now and in the future to re-think our recent actions doesn't allow us to move forward. The untapped opportunities were already tapped, the new administration just put a cap on them.

Stop trying to rewrite how things are done and measure focus more on how we help improve the environment and who we should be partnered with, not downsizing. Collaboration takes people and time.

The new administration wants to cut our budget. I'm not sure now is the time to implement new technologies. Much of our work can be brought online and made more sharable across regions, but it takes an administration that believes in staff/ technology to move something that ambitious forward.

There are federal requirements governed by federal requirements (including judicial decisions that interpret those requirements and endangerment findings) and there are state requirements, governed by state priorities. It's best to maintain an element of federalism in environmental protection.

We can rewrite the boundaries for each agency/department as long as the public doesn't lose service and staffing moves from one to the other. We should work on a transition of resources from one to the other as part of the total plan instead of broad general cuts at the Federal level. Do the states have capacity? Are they prepared to pick up what is cut at the Federal level?

Best practices that are also best in class? Is that like a super-size meal? I find it best when scientists are able to do their job, policy makers analyze and communicate scientific findings, and politicians communicate truthfully to their constituents and explain all options, that would be a best practice, or best in class, or whatever catchphrase you want. This is the federal government, good luck with improving efficiency, increasing accountability, and/ or reducing costs in four years. It can't be easily boiled down to 140 characters.

we have archaic and unprofessional performance and time administration processes. To truly be an outcome oriented, and professional organization, the agency must revamp our useless PARS process, move towards a more feedback and reward/award (bonus) based system focused on results that make a difference for the mission. A component of this would also be to reduce our focus on time card and schedule management. This need and the systems/processes it requires, mandates significant administrative overhead, both in terms of FTE and time of our employees. Systems exist that more efficiently allow employees and managers to manage schedules without a blind focus on time cards, work schedules, leave slips, etc. Evaluating and updating these antiquated approaches will allow for more innovation, improved productivity, better work/life balance, and high job satisfaction.

Technology. We are purely unable to appropriately invest in technology that will make partnering, with our fellow regulators, monitoring our environment and interacting the public.

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Most of the backbone software systems that EPA has selected are inefficient and unwieldy. These include People Plus, CONCUR, property management, document management (operated locally instead of nationally), and training. Contracting and contract management. Their use wastes many staff hours.

These systems should be replaced or combined with more efficient/effective systems that are used by other Agencies.

Contracting Officers and Project Officers are undertrained and do not understand or follow basic Federal contracting regulations and requirements. Existing training and operations of other Agencies (DOD) should be modeled/adopted. This would result in more efficient contracting operations for both EPA and less confusion for our contractors.

Requiring that the office director of a program needs to sign off on all correspondence adds significant delays to communicating with the regulating community, would recommend that only legally binding documents require such a high level signatory. Notices of Violation, Warning Letters and other communicative nonbinding documents could be signed by managers or project managers, compliance officers etc.

EPA projects frequently do not partner with other stakeholders or take into account the broader impact of its decisions. In cases where partnering is done, EPA has already determined the path that will be followed and does not take into account these other partner's viewpoints. By involving stakeholders earlier in the process and addressing their viewpoints, a more comprehensive approach may be used to guide planning and decision-making.

Building closer relationships and providing more training and opportunities for collaboration on enforcement of environmental laws would benefit all the agencies and the regulated community. Enforcement practices are not consistent between states and often not consistent with federal law creating an uneven and unfair playing field.

It seems that EPA's overall approach is that the regulated community is doing its trying to only the minimum regulatory requirements. In fact, in many cases they do their best to "do the right thing" but because of the complexity of the regulations they may not achieve this goal. EPA inspectors look for basic errors and attempt to identify all non-compliances no matter how minor. EPA should first assume that this is what is being done and provide technical assistance; only if the non-compliance continues should a stronger approach to enforcement penalties be pursued. In other words, assume "innocent until proven guilty" first. The latter is often the approach that is taken by States.

Digitizing documents and warehousing them on an FTP website would increase transparency and the ease the level of effort when the public and other stakeholders need access to information. FOIA response would be easier, quicker and less costly, if such a system were developed and put into practice.

Project planning often does not follow the scientific method and consequently results are unusable with the resources wasted. Better planning would result in much more efficient and effective use of resources with more defensible science. The data generated is then unsuitable to address the decisions that are supposed to be based on this information.

The ten EPA regions frequently operate as if they are 10 EPAs rather than parts of a whole Agency. Each has separate training requirements, operational and administrative procedures, organizational structures, etc. that are confusing to EPA employees and those that have to work with EPA on a national basis. Standardizing this would greatly improve efficiencies.

Increasing the number of days allowed for telework would reduce costs and inefficiencies, while greatly improving the quality of life for many employees, without degrading environmental protections.

EPA does not adopt the latest technology. Computer systems (both software and hardware), like many government agencies, are years behind what is commercially available. The use of two monitors is very productive in conducting work but few are available. In fact, even a single monitor is difficult to get. Windows 10 is much more efficient with touch screens but upgrading to this technology will take years. EPA does not provide mobile phone to managers/staff (if needed) that have a need to do so, and has not standardized the hardware that will be used. Conference rooms often do not have video conference capabilities; these frequently do not work. This is especially important with the smaller and smaller budget for travel. Money to attend professional conferences seems to be wasteful but creates the ability to network, share information new ideas and lessons learned.

Dual or larger computer monitors would increase efficiency and save money buy eliminating unnecessary document printing. All most all modern businesses that deal with large volumes of information provide larger or dual monitors to its employees.

Environmental data in Federal Agencies and within EPA is in databases that are not linked and do not contain sufficient metadata. It is not unusual for project data to be in a drive in a project manager's desk or CD. A national database containing all environmental information would minimize repetitive sampling and analysis and permit decision-making using existing data, or identify information that is needed. The cost of creating such a database would be far outweighed by the cost of repetitive sampling and analysis. This information will also be available to our partner stakeholders, providing open access to the data and information used in decision-making and its quality.

The Army Corps of Engineers has an enterprise Best Practices and Lessons Learn program that is exceptional. Sharing this information would benefit EPA, other Federal Agencies, States, Tribes, etc.

The shared service centers are efficient and working well.

Dual or larger computer monitors would increase efficiency and save money by eliminating unnecessary document printing. All most all modern businesses that deal with large volumes of information provide larger or dual monitors to its employees.

HAPPY EMPLOYEES PRODUCE: EPA is a dysfunction agency due to lack of properly and industrially trained people/ managers.

1. Hire only industrially experienced Managers: Managers at EPA do not have subject matter expertise and never worked a day in the industries which they are controlling. Look what they did to the coal mining industries. Managers who made decision about the industries never worked a day in mines,
2. Racism in hiring and promotions: Racism a BIG FACOR in making EPA a non-productive/ dysfunctional agency. Whites particularly white females who never worked any where else to gain practical experience are promoted over non-whites who came to the EPA with industrial/ development and proper experience,..
3. Outside search committees of University- faculty members with subject matter expertise, and with ethnically/racially diversified background should be engaged to hire and promote employees,
4. There are too many so-called GS-14 technical experts at EPA who have no technical expertise. Many of them have nothing to all day---who are paying for them ?
5. Follow how Microsoft and Google hires based on expertise---NOT on color of the skin.
6. There are too many grants offices--why duplication when each division has grant-employee?
7. Environmental Justice people were never involved in any industrial projects,. Where do we need them?
8. Enforcement are mainly done by the State---why EPA has so many enforcement offices on the top each Branch has their own enforcement section,
9. How many cases office of criminal enforcement (CID) have done from 19971 ? What all these people do?
10. Each employee should take rotational opportunities to act managers like Universities,
11. No employees should receive any bonus,
12. Employees should evaluate their managers too----I have seen too many worthless managers.

1. Currently EPA has hardly any contact with the states, tribes, local communities, citizens and industries. Employees are prevented from having any contact with the aforesaid. Permitting and enforcement responsibilities should be left with the aforesaid. You need insiders' help to make changes.
2. Find out who were responsible for Flint Michigan drinking water matters-----fire those manager for their inefficiency ? Why these managers still have their jobs ! These managers are criminals not environmentalists!

1. EPA managers prevents employees to provide customer service to the said. Each employees should be allowed to meet public, locals etc to have contacts with the aforesaid without managerial permission. Each employee should actively participate in professional associations and should attend town hall meetings,
2. Employees should be allowed to meet Citizens to hear their concerns-- right now employees have been told to ignore citizens,
3. Fire the managers who destroyed Coal Mining Industries without authorities. Do you want names ?

1. Unless you punish managers for inefficiency, racism, neglect of citizens---nothing will change,
2. I was called as "mold" when I told that we need industrial growth, and at the same time we can protect our environment, like we can burn clean-coal (President Jimmy Carter started the movement, and later killed by President Reagan),
3. Micro-management up-down must be abolished. My manager acts like a mommy than a manager who has no expertise in subject matter. When I have NO respect for my managers/ directors--how could I be productive?
4. Ask how many people are happy with their managers?
5. Why almost all managers are whites--why benefit of civil rights were given to the white females only (except for some window show)? If non-whites can manage largest technological companies and R&D of the universities- why non whites can not manage EPA? Is there only 2 race at EPA---black and white ?
4. Reduce the number of managers,
5. Each Section Chief/ Branch Chiefs/ Director be audited by Inspector General each year,
6. Employees should have some mechanism to have direct confidential contact with the EPA administrator/ Chief of Staff to that they can suggest improvement needs,

Current technology practice at EPA is satisfactory. The problem is not technology-- the problems are managers and under qualified employees, and racism. Read the reports of the Office of Civil Rights and take remedial actions. Have direct contact the Universities to get the academic input.

1. By transferring all permitting and enforcement functions to the states,
2. Ten (10) regions should be reduced to five (5) regions,
3. There should be direct relations with industries and business like many state agencies. My manager told me not to have any contact with industries, business and citizens,.

1. The practices at Microsoft and Google should be implemented at EPA.
2. Teleworking should be limited to 2 days/ week,
3. I have worked in industries, government and teaching and all over the world. I have never seen such a dysfunctional/ welfare agency like the EPA.. Managers make their employees unproductive as managers were selected based on race not on expertise.

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Overall, EPA management moves very slowly. It is rare to get them to take quick action and many times even when faced with disruptive employees or entire groups, they take no action at all. Within the Office of Air and Radiation there is a group in Las Vegas (the National Center for Radiation Field Operations) that has caused many problems over the past few years and has required staff from other parts of the office to come in and fix their mistakes. There is no action taken against them but in the process other productive staff have had to spend their time correcting NCRFO's mistakes. If EPA management would hold people accountable and not continue to waste money on groups that aren't producing, then the other parts of the office could use that money to produce even more than they already are. Resources are limited and we must be fiscally responsible and use the funds as effectively as possible.

In order to get needed supplies such as pens and notepads, we need written approvals from supervisors and then have to submit requests to the mail room. This is very inefficient. Need to make it easier to get basic supplies.

State counterparts could benefit from EPA training.

I think EPA provides good customer service to these groups. I have contacts in the states who say that they need us to continue to run the programs we run. For example, in the radiation world there are Agreement States who have an agreement with NRC to assume regulatory authority under the Atomic Energy Act. These states are also operating on limited budgets and with few staff and have expressed to me that if EPA discontinues any of its radiation protection programs then that work will not get done because the states don't have the resources to take on the extra work. In the radiation world, at least, the EPA has a good working relationship with the states.

EPA should make it easier to locate documents easier to find on EPA websites.

Use Energy Star only appliances.

It is difficult to sit at a desk for several hours and maintain efficiency. Incorporation of the "varidesks" in EPA offices would decrease fatigue and improve efficiencies.

There are parts of EPA that are duplicative and costly to the agency. In the radiation program there is a field group in Las Vegas (the National Center for Radiation Field Operations) who's cost to productivity ratio is high. They do minimal amount of field work but continue to be fully funded. In the past they have been shut down for lack of a quality system, been investigated by the IG several times, and the staff continually submit EEO complaints on each other, which requires much time from those who have to respond to the complaints. The services they provide to the Regions are minimal. Other agencies such as DOE provide similar services and the EPA Regions have contractors who provide similar expertise. This is one example of costly duplication and I would guess there are similar situations throughout the agency.

See response to Q1 above. Need to provide more training opportunities for State personnel.

From what I've heard, EPA's LEAN process is a good tool for looking for efficiencies within a project or program. I am about to get involved with a LEAN event so I can't say for sure if it is as good as everyone says, but this may be an example that could be built upon or expanded to more programs.

Need to increase opportunities for career mobility and growth.

Emergency Response: Under the previous administration, the ability for on-call emergency responders to be able to use Emergency Response vehicle to commute from home to work to have immediate access to the vehicle 24/7 to respond to an emergency was taken away. This slows response time. Solution: Allow on-call responders to again use Emergency Response vehicles to commute from home to work to have immediate access to respond immediately 24/7.

Remedial Program: The process of cleaning up sites has slowed primarily because of the legal activities associated with finding PRPs and negotiating cleanup actions along with the sometime arduous process of public comment process. Solution: Stream-line the process where EPA can shorten the PRP search requirements and public participation requirements to get sites cleaned up faster. PRPs should understand that the Agency is going to clean up the sites and will go after cost recovery immediately if they do not step up and do it quickly.

Regional Response Team: The ability of the Regional Response Team to have an industry working group as part of the organization was a benefit as EPA/USCG was able to obtain input from those companies to address response organization issues and work together with the regulated community to resolve important issues. This was taken away under the previous administration indicating that it was a conflict of interest. Solution: The ability of the Regional Response Team's to be able to have an Industry Working Group is very important.

Removal Program: The previous administration has strangled to professional emergency responders at the agency by preventing us from providing timely updates to the community by requiring us to go through external affairs prior to posting updates to our stakeholders. Solution: Restore the ability of OSCs to communicate directly with the community without the filter of the Agency Public Affair Directors. EPA Responders are professionals and typically communicate directly with politicians, media, and community verbally on a daily basis and should allow this on written communication. Its all about keeping stakeholders informed.

The Agency has reined in the use of the Government Purchase Card and made it so difficult that those that have them don't want to even use them anymore. Obviously, mistakes can be made but those that continuously make mistakes after being warned should be dealt with appropriately. This would help the agency be more efficient.

I am technology user but not a technology innovator. I know the agency has an issue with only purchasing or using portions of programs that they obtain rather than fully utilizing the power of the program.

There should probably a technology person in each Branch and Division in the Regional Offices to help innovate with technology.

I think that EPA is a go to Agency for State and Local entities. I do believe that the Agency gets too involved in activities that should be done by the State Agency. EPA should be an Agency that provides support to the State for activities they don't have the expertise to perform and be a resource to them. The Agency should be hiring experienced personnel to provide that expertise. I think Regional Offices have a generally very good relationship with the State personnel but because of the politics they are forbidden to discuss. I think the Agency should be right-sizing the personnel it needs in each Division, Branch, etc to accomplish the work and a means of hiring those experience personnel (from the states/industry). The Agency under the previous administration would hire in waves as authority was given rather than hiring when needed based upon a NEED. This is a responsibility of a Manager but they are typically ill equipped to forecast and plan for the future with a determination of the personnel that will be needed.

No, I am not aware of any. My wife works for a large company and she deals with similar issues as we deal with in the Government.

The biggest problem in the Government is the fact that the Agency is penalized for not spending all the money they were allocated in the FY. They should not be penalized for not spending money if there is a good reason for not spending it. This is the only way you will get away with binge spending on things that is really not needed.

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Lack of accountability that derives from very weak positioning with union agreements. Removing poor performing or badly behaving staff is very difficult and time-consuming. It also disrupts morale when other staff can see, but are not aware of any steps taken.

The time limits on funding are very tight, we seem to value speed of spending over quality of product delivered. Resources should be allowed to live longer to accomplish higher goals. PCs and network have room for improvement to facilitate better internal and external collaboration in research. Better ways to track progress of purchases and products being generated. Purchasing supplies with purchase credit cards is perhaps our most inefficient and time consuming process.

Increase funding to Engineering Technical Support Centers, which connect latest research with those solving problems in regions, states, tribes, communities and private sector. Much good has been done and much more could be done to resolve problems via this route. We need to increase opportunities for collaboration across the board.

Overall, I think those parts of EPA that I have worked with provide very good customer service and interaction with state/tribal partners, as well as the public at large.

Increase funding to Engineering Technical Support Centers, which connect latest research with those solving problems in regions, states, tribes, communities and private sector.

The role of the Office of Policy is questionable at the scale it currently operates. Many roles are redundant or could be rolled into corresponding program offices. While some policy should be directed for the Administrator's office, the increase in staffing over the years has been exponential and unnecessary, directly producing very little in measurable results and taking away from direct programmatic operations/needs.

The appropriate offices/people should be running the technology with people who fully understand how to accomplish. I would remove the Office of Technology Solutions (OTS) from the OCFO and place it within OEI. OTS is a black hole that appears to be staffed from people who had jobs unrelated to IT or contract management (which is what they are really doing) and it is creating tremendous inefficiencies for the entire agency with delays, "tickets" and backlogs. Or OCFO management needs to recognize that new leadership is needed within the office.

Establish a performance metric for rules and regulations, if not met in certain time period, rule or regulation self cancels and is reevaluated.

Modernize the Performance Assessment Rating System (PARS) so that it is fully electronic with a suite of standards that can be put in place. This would allow for consistency in standards (e.g., for specific jobs, like being a Project Officer) and would eliminate a lot of needless paper and time copying/sending standards and completed ratings. Most federal agencies have this done electronically now - green EPA is still doing it the old-fashioned paper generating way. Understand this was an option of our FPPS system that we chose not to purchase due to prioritization for other costs.

Do a better job building in technology planning/purchasing and give it to people who truly know how to manage. EPA has no culture of project management - zero - and yet we have some large projects. it should be a mandatory training/certification for these types of positions.

PCs and network.

Improve opportunities for interagency agreements and agreements to jointly pursue research needs with states.

LEAN efforts attempt to prioritize and work toward improving processes for efficiency. Some work to provide tools to those generating products by streamlining steps.

Reduce number of fire drills, particularly those that are driven by arbitrary media request deadlines.

Prioritize "controls" so that important work is not pushed to the side to respond to a second grade class that wrote a letter to the administrator.

Consult with OGC to remove EPA practice of responding to every public rulemaking comment in a response-to-comments document. The law says that major comments should be addressed and this is already done in the preamble. What is the legal requirement/value of a response-to-comment document? I would argue very little.

Focus on statutory requirements: ask program offices and regions to clearly segregate activities into three buckets: what is required by statute, what is explicitly authorised by statute; what is implicitly authorised by statute (voluntary work, e.g., WaterSense, waste min programs) . Change funding so that Congress, OCFO can more clearly see resources devoted to required work vs. resources devoted to voluntary work - as long as funding is mixed together, EPA managers (career and political) have discretion to fund voluntary projects over required work.

Focus on programs implemented by EPA directly; by focusing on statutory work, EPA should be able to provide better customer service. Increase grants to states as you decrease funding for voluntary EPA programs - if you want to keep funding flat. Make an effort to prioritise projects based on risk: what exposures pose the greatest risk to the greatest number of people? This may skew efforts to air rather than Superfund/water but there may be elements of risk we are missing.

Focus on regulatory clarity (make a push to finalize all draft guidance!) and enforcement (especially at federal facilities). We have a lot of regs on the books, and we probably devote half of our resources to updating, maintaining and creating new regs while the other half goes to actually implementing the ones we have.

Focus on monitoring, remote sensing, citizen science initiatives, etc. to act as screening tools for compliance and enforcement work. Also use these tools to gather better data, rather than relaying on models. Need a robust monitoring network across all media to inform EPA's work. "Regulation through information" - motto of TRI program - could be focus of this admin.

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Using the government purchase card requires more steps than seems necessary. There are paper requests to be completed and routed to at least 2 levels often 3. The purchase card approver has to sign, the office director has to sign, the forms then needs concurrence from a funding person. Once all signatures and approvals are collected the order is placed, someone other than the purchase card holder must acknowledge receipt. Once this is completed information must be entered into an web based program,PNet, which requires uploading documents the administrative burden is seemingly endless.Cut out the funding person we have a budget and the office director should be able to make these decisions.Cut out the 3rd party verifier, these are by definition micro purchases so why all of the oversight. Develop one form for record keeping and accountability.

Training forms ,SF182, are too complicated and require more information than seems necessary. Create a more simplified form. The training office must approve all training forms which is a burdensome and wholly unnecessary step. Once a manager or supervisor approves training why should the training office have the final say? They do need copies of the training form for record and reporting purposes but this office has no business deciding who can take what training. The training office has also arbitrarily made a requirement that a purchase card holder cannot use the purchase card to pay for their own training. This means that a purchase card holder would have to ask another purchase card holder to pay for their training. This could put another cardholder at the top of their monthly spending limit. There is also the risk that another card holder isn't available. This requirement is ineffective, has no purpose, solves no problems, and the training office has no business mandating how or by whom the purchase card is used.

None

Procurement Policies need immediate review and revisions. Procurement bureaucracy, red tape, archaic policies are just ridiculous and add tremendous overhead costs to the agency and federal government.

The current procurement IT system (EAS) is terrible and we pay millions of dollars to keep and maintain this piece of junk each year.....REPLACE it with a modern system.....this system is no better than what I used 35 years ago!!

Collaboration

Partner with an IT provider for a best-in-class procurement system!!

Quality Control over these matters

Yes, our agency is overrun with poor and non functioning employees. We all know who they are and where they are. It's ridiculous that the American public is paying salaries for these people. Managers are hampered by Labor Employee Relations and bargaining unions. These reprobates are a black eye on this agency and America. Whittle down the process, reduce the documenting burden, give a strict deadline for improvement. Labor and Employee relations needs a deadline also to provide managers with what they need to fire non functioning employees. Also why the separation of performance and conduct? An employees conduct is as important as their performance. Though they may do a good job but to what end if others can't stand to work with them or even interact with them?

No

Revise and update the procurement processes, systems, policies, and guidelines.

There are still issues with the automated time and attendance. Employees have a deadline to enter their time into the PeoplePlus time and attendance system. Managers have a deadline for approving the time entered. These deadlines are frequently missed by both entities. The OCFO and OARM are working together to initiate an upgrade to the PeoplePlus system. However the upgrade has issues. Time approvers have always had a secondary approver.. The new iteration of PeoplePlus is going to place a huge burden on several in the time entry and time approval chain by requiring someone in this chain to choose a different approver electronically when the primary approver is not available. This is risky and could lead to numerous problems. There should be a secondary time approver who can approve on the fly without intervention from a third party.

Not sure!

A New procurement system!

Quality Control and Collaboration

Shared services concept for business functions.

No

Shared services concept for business functions. Why does the EPA need 4 or 5 procurement offices?

Call back the senior staff, mostly SES and some GS-15s, that are on extended developmental assignments or reassigned to liaison or special projects positions. Quit moving staff into these types of luxury positions when they are not working out in the position they have. Examples -- [REDACTED B6] is on a two year developmental assignment to [REDACTED B6] is now the EPA liaison to [REDACTED B6], and [REDACTED B6] is now the liaison to [REDACTED B6]. It is very costly and inefficient to move people out of these high paying position and replace them with another high paying staff.

Involve the stakeholders in the process early on. Get their feedback via town halls early before finalization of economically significant rules.

Involve the stakeholders in the process early on. Get their feedback via town halls early before finalization of economically significant rules. Have field trips to stakeholders.

Cost Savings Ideas

???Regulations: Have an Analytic Blueprint early in the process of the project that anticipates challenges, budget across years and has sign off from managers and project lead.

???Training: Encourage the online e-learning site and the books on the site for career advancement training.

???Promote detail assignments to help expand staff skills and experience.

???Come up with better way to transition retired staff knowledge to those remaining in the Agency. Perhaps require 1 or more months of mentoring from retiring staff to those staying at the Agency.

???Do cost efficiency analysis and continue to do LEAN analysis to find ways to do work processes more efficiently.

From where I sit it is the absence of an organizational structure that is preventing not just me, but EPA from operating more efficiently and effectively. EPA needs to develop a portfolio governance structure. This is a structure that would be charged with identifying, prioritizing, selecting and assigning resources to the Agency's most important performance improvement projects. The focus, actions and measures by which to evaluate and gauge this structure's efforts would be driven by the Agency's strategic objectives and administrator's priorities. To establish such a thing will not be an easy task to undertake.

Look for real duplication of efforts or apparent duplication and challenge it by asking, why. By way of example the process for approving the importing of hazardous material is ostensibly duplicative. There are three major steps to the process and two are reviews. The first review is done at HQ and the second review is done at a Region. The final determination on whether or not to consent to the request for import is made back at HQ. Now this process has not been looked at deeply to determine if there is true duplicative effort occurring, but there is enough on the surface to go digging and if it is found to eliminate it. If there is duplication and it's removed it will save time and thereby improve the customer experience in dealing with the Agency.

Hire more experienced Process Improvement personnel.

See Q1.

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Over the past several years, the burden for information reporting to EPA headquarters OEM has become burdensome. When OSCs are deployed for smaller responses, OEM requires lots of information and asks questions which influence regional management decisions sometimes harming the relationship with states. Two examples: First, OEM spot reports involve a GS-13 or GS-14 writing reports about an ERNS report the Region has already written. Often, information we have already provided to our regional stakeholders (i.e. states and tribes), is now unnecessarily duplicated. Second, OEM now requires regions to verify that downstream notification have been made under a number of circumstances. This include for any response in which an OSC has been mobilized. In many cases, the OSC may be mobilized at the request of the state for something small, however it may be unnecessary to make downstream notifications due to the amount of material released so the state may choose not to make this notification. This puts EPA and its state stakeholders at odds.

SOLUTION: Add regional managers and phone duty officers for bordering regions to regional ERNS reports. On the second notifications issue, for small spills, states should have primacy on notification of their local stakeholders so OEM should avoid any kind of guidance that implies EPA Regions should be verifying states have made notifications under a given set of circumstances. These matters should be handled on a case by case basis as the discretion of the State and Regional EPA who serves the State. This process worked great before EPA OEM provided guidance after the Gold King Mine. The Gold King Mine spill can't not be used as comparison to everyday emergency responses.

Frankly speaking, we don't need two section chiefs (level 14) under branch director (level 15). Branch director should know well the branch business well, and most of time, the regular employees doing the work handed out from section chief. Two section chiefs cost six figures each, you would save a lot from cut them off.

We need to be more customer service focused. Our customers are states, tribes and local communities, and sometimes the private sector. When an OSC is sent to a response, he or she should be partnering with industry and the state to help minimize environmental impact, prevent breaches in law and reduce fines from the state and federal government. OSCs don't write tickets or fine anyone. Often we are not viewed as a threat. However, many times during an emergency response, other EPA offices or headquarters become involved and disrupt the response. Often, there are fines or additional requirements such as downstream notifications, or questions received from EPA headquarters that send the OSC on an information collection errand. This makes EPA difficult to work with. State and private sector entities have slowly stopped viewing EPA OSCs as partners because of the associated difficulties working with EPA brings.

SOLUTION: Give regions discretion on what information should be collected during a response and when EPA should respond. OEM should stop asking questions that force EPA to request unneeded information from states, locals and the private sector. These are often questions being asked by someone who doesn't have response experience and refuses to accept the regions answer and wants to verify something.

Each of our states is different. Some want EPA to be there emergency response program. Some want EPA to supplement their existing emergency response resources. Some states don't want us there at all. We need to learn what each state wants and incorporate it into our emergency response strategy for that state. Each Regions Emergency Response program already has a relationship with each state and knows what each state wants and needs. We just need to be able to response to each state in a fashion that suits them, not in a fashion that looks consistent to OEM.

We unnecessarily increase costs by duplicating efforts in EPA Headquarters Emergency Response program or by working on projects which are unrelated to our environmental statutes. Several examples are as follows: 1) There is already an abundance of Regional Oversight. Now EPA Headquarters OEM is now providing oversight and writing reports about the reports the regions write. This is a duplication of efforts and often, many of the information request drills we get from EPA OEM increase our project costs, which sometimes end up going through cost recovery. Additionally, there are examples of EPA OEM staff attempting to charge to regional projects and accounts. 2) There is duplication between ERT and CMAD. They essentially are supposed to both be here to assist Superfund with technical issues. Many times, they seem to be working on similar issues. ERT is customer service driven and efficient while CMAD is neither. 3) ORD consistently puts all of its work and effort into projects designed to produce publication which do not assist EPA in protection of human health and the environment. A small percentage of ORD projects have ever translated into a product that is in anyway useable by EPA Regions and regulatory programs. Despite this ORD???'s staff are some of the most highly payed staff in EPA.

SOLUTION: Reduce duplication between EPA Regional EOCs and Head Quarters EOC. Eliminate CMAD. Eliminate ORD.

Currently, our emergency responders do not take their vehicles home while on call. There are many examples where this has added 3 to 4 hours to our response time. These examples are often in instances where states have requested our assistance to protect human health, i.e. when there is a chemical fire near a neighborhood and residents or fire fighters are being exposed to smoke. State can't understand why we take so long to respond.

SOLUTION: Allow EPA OSCs who are on call to park their emergency response vehicles at their residence. This is common practice for other emergency response organizations.

Over the past decade we ramped up homeland security funding and spending at EPA, yet we have very little direct homeland security responsibility. In a real-world homeland security event, we would defer to FBI, Department of Homeland Security or other federal agencies and assume cleanup responsibility after they have performed their investigation and released the Site. There are numerous real-world examples where this has happened. EPA does not make homeland security decisions. We've given out hundreds of expensive security clearances to OSCs and other EPA staff who do not, and never will access classified information.

SOLUTION: Reduce homeland security funding and fund only that work which other homeland security agencies think EPA should be doing. Include Regional Emergency Responders like OSCs in this decision as they have actual emergency response experience and know what EPA would do in a homeland security response. Take away security clearances for people who do not access classified information on a regular basis.

Many organization base promotions and performance on work ethic, skills and professional standing. At EPA, these things seem to be based on seniority and personal relationships. We continuously reward the people who have hung around in a job for the longest. These are rarely the people who have the best skill set or serve the agency in the best way.

There are no incentives for doing things efficiently and saving money. Because of this, many senior EPA employees make only a marginal effort to conserve resources.

If I can do a project for \$20,000 that a senior engineer could do for \$30,000, isn't that worth make note of. No one seems to care or recognize skill in this organization.

SOLUTION: Change the culture by encouraging older staff to retire. Allow the states and locals to grade or rate each project EPA works on. After all, they are our customers.

Eliminate the Office of Research & Development's (ORD's) Office of Administration and Research Support (OARS). This reorganization was implemented in 2009. The idea was to reduce the administrative burden by consolidating budget, human resources, travel, and contract services. Job functions were pulled from remote locations and given to others thousands of miles away leaving sites with inefficient and inadequate administrative support, and highly compensated supervisors were left with very few (~<5) direct reports. Bottom line is it proved to be nothing more than a power grab and an excuse to raise the grade of many employees. No staff positions were eliminated--only moved around on paper without a clear distinction in job functions and pay grades with the administrative burden falling on the scientific community.

Remote sites once ran like well-oiled machines, but once OARS stood up, that totally disappeared. Scientists who were once able to concentrate on science are now performing more administrative-type duties. Give remotes back their purchasing agents, travel functions (SEE employee), budget, and contract specialists. Return obligational authority to a select number of Funds Control Officers. Appears contractors have more rights and system permissions than do Feds who are more knowledgeable of what needs to be accomplished.

Reduce the number of systems that do basically the same thing or nothing at all--namely, ORD's Purchase Card System. Highly paid scientists are having to do more functions that were originally done by lesser paid administrative staff, such as placing orders and completing and revising bank card forms or purchase orders.

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Place more FTE in the critical "money spending areas" such as Contracting for oversight of contractors performance, stricter compliance with contracts, less change orders, invoice approvals are performed correctly, timely closeout of contracts (ties money up). With the current staff we have nationwide, this area is getting neglected. Hire out (a Contractor) for Close-out activities if no FTE available.

Better results with Private Sector - increased emphasis on building performance based incentives and disincentives. Currently by policy only, Contracting Officers are discouraged from placing disincentives in contracts and are not trained enough to include liquidated damages (i.e. if contractor delays entire project, no remedy, just deal with it by other means). More training, more models of performance based Quality Assurance Surveillance Plans etc..

We do a good job here! We are sensitive, good listeners, and make others feel important. I see it everyday and I'm amazed at how EPA personnel will bend over backwards to help folks.

Aside from true emergencies, negotiate all work across the national contracts: Superfund Technical Assistance Response Team (START Contract) (the contract that mostly assesses the site for EPA and also, although no one will say it formally, supplements our workforce) and the Emergency Rapid Response Service (ERRS Contract), the construction contract. These contracts are HIGH dollar contracts. They are currently set-up to essentially issue what EPA (poorly trained cost estimators) estimates the costs (always high 20-30%). A not-to-exceed cost ceiling is given to the contractor to do the work. If we change that and now ask the contractor to propose their costs, I strongly believe it will be lower, thus saving the EPA valuable tax payer dollars. Most Contracting Officers coming to EPA from other agencies are bewildered by this process and often ask how Price Reasonableness is checked and why these contracts are set-up this way (aside from true emergencies). The seasoned COs say the Contractor has 5 days to let us know if they think the ceiling is unreasonable.

We are one of the few agencies whose financial system (called Compass) and contracts system (called EAS) are separated. The amount of lost man-hours trying to make this process work is highly inefficient. Although, this would require up front costs. You could start with making it easier for Contracting Officers to move money around within EAS. Also keep a close eye on the EAS Contractor. For every change, users go from two steps/buttons to at least 5-7 steps/buttons to accomplish same task and thus, increasing the complexity of the system, with little value to the Agency. Ask them to reduce the number of buttons for example to place an attachment in the system (currently takes 3-4!).

Providing EPA employees with dual monitors would facilitate more efficient and effective review and analysis of documents and data.

No response.

Our personnel time tracking process is ridiculous (3 systems must be utilized to get one picture of 2 week work period- People Plus, DFS, and Lotus Notes for specific leave requests). They say its coming, its going to get better, its been 8 years for me. I spend too much time trying to make sure each system matches the next.

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We switched from WebForms to PeoplePlus for absence requests, but for individuals on a credit hours schedule, the system doesn't transfer absence requests to the timecard. I spend a ridiculous amount of time instructing staff to amend timecards to match leave slips or vice versa. I would make the system work for all types of schedules.

Great Lakes office often does "duplication of efforts" jobs (water issues are handled in Water Division in R5 and other issues are duplicative to the Land and Chemicals Division's positions). Elimination of that office will result in savings to many unnecessary managers positions and will actually make better consistency in the similar procedures. (R5). International (Canadian) cooperation can be handled by 2 positions for International cooperation's (barely busy) in RAO, that are also outside of the Great Lakes Office.

Hold states more accountable. We currently give states broad latitude and don't hold them accountable for high-quality work plans or for producing results in reasonable amounts of time with reasonable amounts of taxpayer money.

More should be handled by regions and less from HQs - regions do understand local uniqueness better and can implement programs better than someone from HQ who has to travel and spend more \$\$ to become familiar with states, tribes and locals. That will eliminate extra steps of planning and assessments by HQs, that takes time from real work in regions. Simple HQs involvement could be done through web control via databases, etc. Some programs do not need HQs participation at all - will shrink the size of HQs and their huge compensations for lot of duplication and extra layers of control.

Increase staffing levels for Project Officers administering grants and technical assistance (especially Cooperative Agreements) to approach the levels recommended in the LMI Workload Model done by the Agency several years ago. The LMI Model suggested my group should have 47 Project Officers. I have 14. We don't have the time to both effectively administer a grant program and also provide high-quality customer service and technical support.

Creating volunteer consortium for each area of concern/program and working together to address it (will cover more than doing it from their individual points of interest). People like to be a part of something bigger than them alone, plus it serves as an educational bonus.

No. I think we are doing the best we can with the limited resources we have, and it isn't enough - our responsibilities to tribes and environmental justice communities and trust territories falls far behind.

Limiting positions that are merit promotions due to years of service but absence of specialized educations. Some with only HS diploma working 20 years claim that they can be a Technical specialist is absurd. Job is done by others (educated professionals) who are assigned by managers to help/review and implement projects on behalf of the "long timers" anyway. That takes time from work assigned to professionals and makes them not happy at work (you do all work, but after years of college, repayment of educational loans and the same grades with the ones you do work for - they get no recognition and watch people they helping get awarded). Technical and scientific positions should not be given to people without proper education - it is an expensive way that only harms taxpayers and is not helping to maintain real environmental protection of Americans. By the way - when something goes wrong, guess who gets blamed by them and managers? EPA is in huge need of educated professionals who know risk assessment, chemists, chemical engenders, biologist, etc. "Environmental Scientist" positions today are mostly occupied by Long timers, not professionals with same compensation but luck of quality work.

Improve timekeeping and administrative processes and improve IGMS, so we can spend more time working and less time filing paperwork preparing to work.

Many US Agencies and Departments have same area of interests with EPA. Sharing technical models from NOAA, DOA, DOE, Coast Guard and others can eliminate a need in similar models development. Interagency cooperation is the way of future savings and gains in efficiency. If EPA's few emergency responders need training that exists in Los Alamos Nat. Lab - it is less expensive to be train there, it should be doable.

Largely we cannot. Even if we could, if we were to shift away from things we were doing expecting that other agencies would pick up those same tasks, we would find that they already have plans for their own appropriations that don't include our great ideas about what else they could be doing. We have been burned on this topic several times in the past decade.

By making one agency responsible for each need. For Example: FIFRA program could be described as "too many cooks spoil the broth" - done by EPA, Dep. of Agriculture and Departments of Health and each state in US with their multiple departments. Lots of duplication and far from perfect. Should be under one agency for better results.

Yes, but to reveal them here would compromise the anonymity of my survey. Perhaps solicit them in a separate query, so that answers there couldn't be traced back to answers here?

Decrease all level supervisors and assign more people to each. It is insane to have 3 managers in one branch with 7 employees !!! Plus one adm. assistant !!!

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It's hard to feel motivated when your very existence is challenged. I have worked for EPA for 30 years. I was hired during the Reagan administration and I have never felt so attacked.

FPPS and Sunflower are two systems that are very difficult to navigate and inefficient. Both these systems need significant improvements to be more user friendly.

I think there are many under served communities where industries park there pollution machines because they know that no one is paying attention.

Information feeds and informs customers and communities - the more information the Agency shares about resources better. Secrets and dishonesty kills.

Youth is the future. Many young people are interested in protecting Human Health and the Environment but we seem to have limited opportunities for them to get involved.

We have been too focused on survival to entertain new technologies. Advancements in technology use and applications often come when employees feel motivated and not terrified.

Better technology. Computers are not efficient and don't have enough computing power to get most of our data intensive analyses. Current computer contracts make it difficult to purchase additional desktop machines when more computing power is needed, but at intermittent times.

This administration only seems interested in destroying our interest and mission.

EPA use to be one of the 10 ten federal agencies to work for. Since that is no longer the case I guess we could start by building morale and trust.

Too many layers in management. In my office, things get bogged in the management chain often and as a trend there's not been accountability to correct this. Also, the lack of effective management. Correction is to install effective leaders and managers.

No comment.

We can provide better customer service at large by listening to our customers, understanding relevant regulations, providing a timely response that's in line with regulations while having a culture of government that supports the health and welfare of the people and encourages business growth and development.

Absolutely! Continuing a VERA/VSIP for employees in FY2018 to encourage transitions and allow for faster and deeper restructuring of the Agency.

Someone should be actively exploring, analyzing and adjusting the Feds approach to utilizing appropriate, productive, effective enterprise technologies.

Without rich awareness of other Agency's responsibilities, I recommend loose consolidation of duplicative functions, like travel, time card management, supply ordering, etc. where a phone call is made to a customer service center to complete these tasks and employees could focus more on mission critical work. Our successful modeling of this could be mirrored, as appropriate in the States, likewise, if a state is successful at this now, the Feds should mirror this process that's being done in the States.

no comment

At EPA we have a habit of duplicating services. Everyone is expected to produce, travel, PR even when it is only done one or twice a year. This is a major loss of time, since doing a travel or PR once or twice a year, has a major learning curve every time you do the task.

OEI went through a reorganization at the end of the last administration that took functions in one office, and split them into 2 or more offices. The reorganization should be cancelled in an effort to save funds and streamline OEI. With the new additional offices each is duplicating services, budget, timekeepers, SES and additional supervisors. Also, OEI is expecting to spend 10 thousands of dollars to move people even though most employees work out of the office 2 days a week and have at least once compressed day.

It can take almost a year to hire someone from outside of the Agency, from the time the approving official signs off on the hiring action to the time the new employee can begin work. Currently HR tracks time-to-hire, but does not include this entire time period in their metric. We should look at how long each step is taking within that time and streamline each step. It is not this bad at other federal agencies so OPM rules cannot be wholly responsible for the problem. We are losing good candidates during the security clearance step especially given how long it can take.

Every single time an employee wants to take training, a form must be filled out and then sent to a single person in OARM. I am not aware they collect data for any purpose or review forms for any reason. This is an unnecessary bottleneck that prevents employees from taking advantage of last-minute training opportunities and wastes resources.

Our timekeeping system is not well integrated with our leave request system. When you request leave that leave should be added to your timecard. Right now supervisors have to run a report to match leave requests with reported time, a wasted step that adds up to lots of lost productivity.

In order to load software on your computer you must seek approval, and this process could be streamlined significantly. Also, the agency should broadly approve the use of common software packages and exclude them from this process.

Employees should be able to create e-mail groups without having to seek assistance and approval from a contractor. This is a waste of money.

We could do a better job of listening to the public and communities about their needs and prioritizing their needs. At a minimum, we should have a website where the public can communicate their needs to the agency.

We need one-stop shopping for each customer base. A State should be able to talk to one person about all of their pending approvals. An industry person should be able to learn about all of the requirements they must meet in one place.

Currently when you call EZTech for help with a computer hardware or software issue, a ticket is created. That ticket is ???closed??. At the end of the interaction whether or not your problem was resolved, and the contractor can count that interaction as a success. The performance metrics for computer support should track not just whether a ticket is closed, but also whether a problem was resolved in the employee's opinion. Otherwise there is no incentive for persistence in solving difficult problems.

For employees who travel or work in the field, ipads can be invaluable ??? but we have to let them on our network. Otherwise employees waste time logging in over and over to remote access all day long.

We should allow use of Microsoft apps on our iPhones and iPads. I have been told they have not been ???cleared??. By security personnel at EPA; however DHS, GSA and others have all cleared their use. Why does each agency need to individually screen apps? How could we need better security than DHS? Doesn't the Apple store do a screen before letting apps be offered in their store?

We should evaluate the overlap of OSRE, OFA and Superfund and consolidate efforts.

We should evaluate the overlap of OHS and OLEM's emergency response work and consolidate efforts.

The IT available to GSA employees (hardware and software) is far superior to that at EPA, and may even be delivered at a lower cost. It allows employees to do their jobs more effectively and efficiently. Could we just buy in to whatever contract they use?

At this point, I think we have the opposite problem: People are acting as if we are essentially on auto-pilot because the Executive branch is managing neither the budget nor people's time. Contracts using FY2016 funds have finally been issued, so people are starting to spend FY2017 to achieve objectives that seem to have been defined by the last administration.

Reasonable people and cooler heads seem to have relatively little influence at the staff level. There are modest Bush-era ideas and programs that could be resurrected, but instead we persist with Obama-era policies because the new Administration has made no effort to engage people, and staff are afraid to speak up because the new administration will just kill their program.

There are a lot of people at EPA with environmental expertise to assist many programs. If you want to downsize certain offices, you might want to let some of the EPA employees at those offices seek out other offices--and take their slot with them. For example, if the climate program is downsized, why demoralize the staff which will cause them to be unproductive and waste resources? Instead, empower them to find other offices where their skills are valued, take their slots, and get something useful done? (The slot could revert to the original office or vanish when they leave the agency.)

The phased-retirement program defined by statute and OPM regulations is not being effectively implemented by EPA, whose HR department has chosen to follow a narrow interpretation of the program so as to ensure that it is not used by anyone who was not about to retire anyway. If broadly construed, the OPM regulations would allow anyone eligible for retirement, to convert to half-time until they are ready to retire. That would free up many FTE's as there are people who would like to start up businesses or move to a new field but stay with EPA half time until the new activity is up and running . That is, phased retirement could be structured so as to encourage people who would otherwise remain at EPA, to instead phase into retirement. Instead, it is structured to get people ready to retire to stick around half-time for one more year.

In the climate change area, the first step is that the new management of EPA needs to engage everybody to try to learn what staff might be able to do consistent with Administration preferences. There are lots of Bush-era activities in OAR that were cancelled under Obama that could be reasonably resurrected, if management solicited such ideas. The French political term "cohabitation" comes to mind. Perhaps you did not wish to have a staff of climate-change analysts, but you have one. Why not engage them to see what they can do that--from your perspective--will seem the most constructive. The failure to engage just keeps them carrying out missions defined during the last administration.

1. There need to be suggestion boxes at several levels of hierarchy--your level, the AA level, and the division level.
2. The Administrator must interact with EPA employees a lot more. It's really weird that he goes out and talks to workers of regulated industries but not his own employees.
3. I have never heard of a good corporate CEO who decided that because he wants to spin off a division, he will stop managing it for the next year and just let it bleed resources. But that is what you are doing. Resources are being wasted because FY16-17 and FY17-18 funds are being spent to carry out missions defined during the last administration which this Administration may well decide not to complete. The fact that you want to eliminate or curtail some programs has indirectly morphed into denial that these programs are spending a lot of money now and you are failing to manage them.

Well, actually, I have found that the major employee cuts and loss of administrative staff positions in favor of requiring employees to book their own travel on Concur (or the program of the day) or do all of their own paralegal tasks like setting up and managing litigation holds or document management that have been done based on supposed cost savings and efficiency have actually made these tasks MORE time intensive and inefficient. Given that I make considerably more than the travel agents, legal assistants, and paralegals we used to have (and that DOJ still uses), I remain convinced that this is actually costing the agency more money in terms of how my time is spent than it did when we had more administrative staff. For example, every time I have to use Concur, I am basically starting from scratch because I only travel intermittently. It is a horrible program that everyone hates and as a result it takes me considerably more time to book a trip and then to file all the receipts than it takes the legal secretaries who handle travel for all the attorneys at DOJ who can do travel requests in no time. My time is billed at what I am guessing to be roughly 3 times the amount we paid the travel agents or secretaries we used to have to take probably 3 times as long to do a task that they do better since that was part of their daily job. So in getting rid of travel agents, we are now spending probably 9 times as much money to book the same trip as we did when we had adequate support staff that handled all of our travel. It is also less time for me to do the job you are paying me 3 times as much to do. Personally, I would hire more admin staff to handle all travel and paralegal activities such as filing and archiving records.

Personally, I have found that we have very good relationships with the States as we routinely consult them early on and try to encourage their participation in our negotiations. I have no experience with Tribes on this, but if we are not already doing this, we should. I do think we do not do enough to involve local community groups in our enforcement and compliance work unless they have either filed a complaint or otherwise reach out to us on cases they find out about, and I do think we would be well served to have one of the steps of our early enforcement process to look into involving local government or community groups.

As for the private sector, we would do well to revive the New Owner Audit Initiative, which waived gravity penalty for any company coming in to do a voluntary audit after acquisition of an existing facility to bring it into compliance. It worked very well when we were pushing it, as it provided a clean slate and certainty going forward for new owners and often resulted in significant environmental benefits with relatively minimal technical efforts on the part of the Agency.

I think our advocacy commissions do a pretty good job of this and I would keep and enhance them with more publication and outreach about their existence as well as doing more to incorporate their recommendations into our work.

Frankly, we have had so many cuts over the last 12 years that we are becoming inefficient for lack of personnel to do our jobs faster and environmental protection has, in my opinion, suffered because of it. We especially need more inspectors and more technical staff and we need whole teams of employees to handle all of our FOIA requests, as they significantly overwhelm our existing staff and prevent us from doing work to ensure environmental protection.

I do think we are already doing much of this in the compliance and enforcement context under the Next Gen program, but we lack major data storage and enhanced web capacity to help store, process, and publicly publish the data we receive so that they can hold us and the regulated community accountable. This is across all programs. I do think the major updates to ISIS and ECHO have been major steps forward.

As I understand it, we already have several inter-agency working groups by issue on this. I would continue to let them do their jobs rather than reinvent the wheel on this.

Personally, we should align our CMS system with DOJ's so that we are able to pull documents at any time without having to have each individual working on a document pull their files. This should not be SharePoint based as SharePoint is a ridiculously inefficient system in my opinion. It also needs to be automated the way DOJ's system is so that you essentially have to take extra steps to create a document that is not automatically numbered and organized by case. This is long overdue, but every attempt to institute a CMS at EPA has been massively bungled and half-hearted. This would also make responding to FOIA requests far easier and may even allow it to be handled by a separate FOIA team, which would be enormously efficient and cost effective.

As a general rule, I find that we are constantly trying to "reduce costs" by getting the cheapest software or contract with the cheapest landlords instead of looking at whether it might be worthy spending more on a software that actually works better and faster (i.e., choosing to have only Lexis because it's cheaper rather than having both Lexis and Westlaw, even though Westlaw is often better and faster) or factoring in the costs of lost productivity and labor turnover that comes every time we switch office locations. The entire SharePoint system is an example of this. Concur is even worse. The office move in 2014 was a particularly epic example of being penny wise and pound foolish, as the process essentially ended up having 7,000 people switch offices throughout the entire complex to accommodate 500 people from L street all because they wanted to end a lease in 6 months instead of taking a longer time with a public process and getting staff buy-in and investing in reconfiguring spaces at Federal Triangle in advance to have a smooth transition with support from the bottom up. Taking a longer time to plan for consolidating offices with staff buy-in would have surely resulted in far fewer people moving around (thus saving moving costs), avoided the 12 months of anger and lost productivity and permanently damaged relationships that came from the bitterness of the process, and would have enabled desperately needed updates to be made to the building that could have included energy and space saving updates that would have saved the government much more money over the long haul. I will note that although DOJ is having to move, they gave their staff over 1.5 years notice and have already started a staff process to help configure the new space. In sum, I find that too many people in government "accounting" never think about the effects of a "cheaper" solution on one line item that will have much larger implications to employee productivity and morale, even though labor is presumably one of the Agency's biggest expenses. They treat our salaries as sunk costs and never seem to think about how the choices they make to constantly look "cheaper" actually end up being vastly more

HR is short staffed and remote. Employees have to waste a lot of time trying to contact HR, waiting for HR to complete basic tasks, and following up when basic tasks are not completed. Ideally we would have local HR staff who are able to respond efficiently and effectively to our operational needs. Even if we can't have local HR staff, it would be helpful to have more HR staff so there is not such a backlog in the HR offices.

We are able to understand the needs of states and tribes, build better relationships, and provide better customer service when we are able to meet in person. Reducing restrictions on travel would allow us to meet in person and provide better customer service to states, tribes, local communities, and regulated parties.

Responding to FOIA requests is highly inefficient. With better software we could save large amounts of time and money on FOIA response. Specifically:

- We need an up to date and fully functional version of Relativity (the current version has several limitations including: it does not deduplicate documents or identify email threads, the current version contains sorting and search features that can only be used by eDiscovery and not by EPA users, and the current version has limited capacity for redacting documents)
- We need a searchable version of Microsoft Office (the search function on the current version is unreliable so employees cannot search their own email)
- We need software that will allow us to use our Lotus Notes files. (Currently we are not able to do a centralized search of Lotus Notes for FOIA, we have no platform for reviewing Lotus documents for FOIA, and we lack software to convert Lotus documents to PDFs for production)

In my opinion there is nothing preventing or prohibiting an employee from doing their job efficiently and effectively. In my time at EPA I have experienced miss-management, a lack of integrity by management, a lack of fiscal responsibility, and many other issues that have been made public by media, the public, the courts, and the legislature. So everyone knows what the issues are however the challenge has been how do we go from business as usual to breakthrough. I would recommend that leadership read the following article and apply it. Change starts at the top.

<https://hbr.org/2016/03/the-most-important-leadership-competencies-according-to-leaders-around-the-world>

I have had very effective relationships with all stakeholders. The key to those relationships have been 1) clearly articulating the purpose, 2) ensuring that all critical parties are at the table and have all the information, 3) the location of the communication is neutral, 4) the tone of the conversations (orally or written) are appropriate and solution driven, 5) the timing of the conversations and engagement are good, and 6) the one always follows up on commitment and show appreciation. I believe whatever the topic is (science, law, or policy) results can be achieved using this steps I stated above.

early, often, and honest engagement.

Yes. I think there are many EPA employees that would be willing to step forward and make changes. However, one must start at the leadership and make them lead/manage.

Although the PeoplePlus system has improved recently, it still needs many additional improvements to functions smoothly. For example, if one of my staff need to change their leave request that I have already approved, they need to send me an e-mail and then I need to go search for it in the system. The system should have a built-in function for staff to request an approved leave request be returned for modification/cancelation.

As a manager of a regional program, I continue to see the need for improved information systems and information exchange with our partners as key to getting better environmental results while reducing cost. Unfortunately, the hurdles at OEI are huge and there is little support for program staff to develop and improve systems.

OEI and the IT staff in the agency appear to see their role as gatekeepers to assure everything meets info security policies, and they provide minimal support to programs needing to develop better systems to improve their capabilities.

I think we need to focus future hiring on well rounded individuals with strong quantitative skills that can help improve systems. I also think we need to hire better contractors with specialized skills rather than bloated beltway bandits that throw inexperienced staff on our agency projects.

This requires a cultural shift. We need to be less prescriptive when the issue only have localized impact . . . stay within regulatory boundaries. Issues such as brownfields sites, superfund site, RCRA sites typically only have localized impact, so EPA should look at ourselves as supporting the state, tribe (if applicable) and/or local community. State and local environmental programs have evolved tremendously in the past 40 years, and we need to defer to State/Local/Tribal programs and policies on localized issues and support these programs technically and financially.

However, if the environmental issue has cross regulatory border issues, then there is a greater role for EPA to assure minimum standards are met, and assure local values are considered.

I have worked at EPA a long time. When I started at EPA, there seemed to be more people coming into work on a Saturday than the number of people now coming in on a Friday. The expansion of the alternative work schedule, flexiplace, and travel comp time policies have definitely made managing staff and maintaining a cohesive team more difficult. Much of the work we do in the agency is not tremendously measureable, so the increased flexibility has definitely enabled the poor performers to get away with doing even less.

Much better use of information technology tools. We have invested in software such as SharePoint, but very few people have learned how to use the tools we have in our tool chest.

I think we could work more with Agencies like the Army Corp of Engineers. For example, the EPA contracting bureaucracy is not great. The Corp does a lot of contracting. I think EPA could form stronger partnerships with the Corp.

I think it all comes down to leadership, setting expectations, and acknowledging accomplishments. Leaders need to lead by example. Teams with good leaders are more likely to be productive and engaged. Leaders need to know what people down in the trenches are doing. In high school, I had an administrative job in a publishing company of about 150 people. The president of the company routinely walked around and checked in on the work people were doing. He even chatted briefly with me on occasion. Leadership in my region is ok, but is somewhat out of touch. IMO, HQ management not adequately in touch with the real world.

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Currently the most inefficient thing my staff and I are having to do is get "pre-clearance" screening from new Administration for routine work such as proposing approval of SIP actions and proposing permit actions. This process has caused 2-4 week delays in routine business. We need to get back to the EPA's existing delegations and allow the Regions to process the routine work they do without micro-management. We know how to flag major issues or keep the new Administration in the loop if they high level issues of concern that they want to be consulted on. We are professionals.

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EPA staff already works extremely well with States and industry especially when "political agendas" are minimized or there if there are no significant differences in "rule of law" interpretations. Often the biggest obstacle we face is resolution on "rule of law" issues....sometimes this means we and the State agree and industry disagrees; sometimes we and a State disagree. The States and industry are not always right, and EPA is not always right.....its simply a fact of doing business. We've even had State environmental staff and managers ask us to disapprove their work so that they can get a better environmental result where they believe politics sideswiped the permit development or rulemaking process. Best idea is keep politics and political agendas outside the regulatory and permitting arena....including arguments that economic development supercedes regulatory/permitting process.

Creating more of a culture where we (EPA) insist that states and tribes perform duties within their own mandate rather than run to EPA whenever their particular jurisdiction isn't financially or technically capable of implementing their own programs.

Creating more of a culture where we (EPA) insist that states and tribes perform duties within their own mandate rather than run to EPA whenever their particular jurisdiction isn't financially or technically capable of implementing their own programs.

Stop fabricating the notion that this is a major issue is my main input. I do believe the Agency can do more upfront work with stakeholders when rules or rulemaking changes are deemed necessary. Probably one of the biggest complaints we routinely face is tied to our commitment to work with States where we believe they should have the first opportunity to address citizen complaints. Many citizens complain to EPA about the States' unresponsiveness to their complaints and come to EPA as a "last" resort hoping EPA will step in. States have to be just as committed to resolving and investigating citizen complaints, or to carrying out the roles their responsible to implementing based on Federal authorizations/approvals.

see answer to Q.2

see answer to Q.2

Move EPA's entire record management system from hardcopy to electronic file maintenance. Too many times individual program offices have to create their own "quasi" electronic file maintenance or recordkeeping system in lieu of generating paper records. Moving the Agency to electronic files would assist in cutting down on our time to process FOIAs as well.....the problem has always been budgetary funding for this movement. We're in the dark ages with respect to electronic records. Everything should be done electronically.....permits, SIP submittal and processing, grants, FOIAs, upload portals for States to send information to EPA, etc..

Reduce feel good programs, focus on the core business. Get serious about a system that tracks employee workweek/accountability.

Reduce feel good programs, focus on the core business. Get serious about a system that tracks employee workweek/accountability.

Its not so much new technology, but using what's available and funding the use.

Use of SharePoint to maximum extent by staff and management for file sharing/work reviews.

Use PKI digital signature process.

Full digitize document management and make searchable for staff. Electronic file management system.

This is not an issue.....this is a very "fake" and "fabricated" issue. We already do this extremely well....its just that disagreements get media attention. Most good news stories go unreported.

EPA Region 6 Air Program has moved to electronic concurrence of SIPs and permits, and digital PKI signature of SIP documents. This has cut our wait time to publish proposed actions on SIPs in the Federal Register. We have also move to electronic public notice platform of proposed permits where we are the primary permitting authority.....this was an effort worked on jointly by R.6 and other Regions. We rarely have to pay for newspaper public notices at this point which saves EPA and taxpayers money for publication costs.

The sheer number of annual mandatory electronic training requirements has become ridiculous. If you multiply that number across the Agency and across government in general, the amount of wasted employee time is enormous. Things like ethics training, travel card training, tribal training, hatch act training, computer security training, etc. It does NOT all need to be annual. We are either bound by ethics regs or we are not, and if someone breaks them, they should be held accountable. Additionally, our electronic systems such as Concur, People Plus, FPPS (for personnel), etc. are purportedly to make things more efficient. I believe most individuals would tell you things are much less efficient than if we went back to the stone ages of paper signatures. In addition to being burdensome, they are designed with the end user (let's say a travel accounting person) in mind, with the user (traveler) interface not at all user friendly, and often counterintuitive. This is exacerbated by then centralizing functions so that there is no longer a person to go to within a home organization to help navigate, and further exacerbated by the fact that every employee needs to know how to use the system and learn all of its idiosyncracies due to the fact that these systems supposedly lessened the need for administrative assistants. So, you have highly paid engineers and scientists wasting time trying to figure out admin systems. Lastly, if you could do ONE THING, PLEASE do away with centralized personnel management at our shared service centers. I'm sure they are very nice people, but ANYONE who has tried to hire or do anything else personnel-related throughout the Agency will tell you that it might have looked good on paper, but all these years later, we are being crushed under the inefficiency and bureaucracy of it. One of the sub-categories on the personnel side is this idiotic rule that national Office of Policy and Management is (supposedly) shoving down our throats that if an office has more than a certain percentage of technical individual (engineer, scientist, biologist, etc.), then the first line supervisor, MUST be technical. So, an engineer can supervise an office full of biologists, but an MBA or otherwise non 'technical' person, who may have been with an organization for a while, be a superstar, and be an outstanding manager is not even able to compete for the opportunity. We wonder why our management chain is not 'diverse' enough with a wide variety of experience and opinion on how to deal with states, external partners, consider policy, etc... We do not allow anyone but technical folks to enter the management chain at this point. That is going to cripple the ability of this Agency to manage in the future.

Stop all the rhetoric on both sides. Industry is not evil and environmentalists are not delusional tree huggers. We need everyone in the room.

Our legal resources (OGC, OECA and Regional Counsels) have been set up with leadership that knows the law, but has never been asked to or trained to manage. Therefore, while a legal manager could talk the ins and outs of the clean air act with you ad nauseum, they have no idea how to run an office, work with internal or external customers, motivate employees, manage work flow, etc. Additionally, the norm has become that they no longer see themselves as advisors, but rather instructors/final decision makers. I would strongly suggest placing individuals high in these management chains with some level of management experience (maybe someone with an MBA or MPA) to help them get their ships in order, tighten them up, become more efficient and work better with internal and external partners.

Be careful here. We took the FPPS system from another agency so they could run some of it for us, and it is horrific. We 'centralized' the personnel functions into the abject failure that we call the shared service centers. I can attest to the fact that managers are spending (wasting) two and three times the hours trying to get a single thing accomplished through a shared service center than it ever took before.

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1. Go back to having timecards due AFTER the pay period has ended, with supervisor approval on Monday. Years ago, when we went from paper cards to online submittal and changed to timecards being approved on Monday, it was a great change which was touted as allowing us to dramatically reduce the number of correction cards (and was just plain more logical and practical). When we switched payroll processors awhile ago, the Agency went back to having timecards due before the pay period has ended, which causes me to have to submit (and my supervisor to approve) correction timecards for hours worked on Friday, which also leads to my leave or credit hour balances not being accurate. The last change also led to us being paid on Fridays, even though the official pay date is still the following Tuesday. If going back to approving time on Monday would cause us to get paid on our actual pay date instead of three days early, I don't see how that would be a problem.

2. Related to #1 above, stop having timecards due early around holidays, which again leads to more correction timecards. Since everything is computerized, missing one day in the schedule shouldn't require having to submit time early (especially since we're already getting our pay three days before pay day). If the schedule really does cut things that short, the Agency could permanently adjust the pay date schedule to Wednesday so that we never have to submit corrected timecards.

3. Fixing the following three issues won't increase efficiency, but would increase accuracy:

a) A change in rounding methodology several years ago causes us to get paid slightly different amounts from one pay period to the next, depending on if we take leave or not, even though the total hours being paid each pay period is 80. While it's just a few cents each pay period, this is just wrong.

b) The "Projected Year End Balance" on our Earnings and Leave Statements is actually showing how much more leave we will accumulate by the end of the leave year. It doesn't add in the current balance to show the true projected year-end balance. The "Use Or Lose Balance" number shown is correct, taking into account the current balance.

c) The current payroll processor shows balances on our Earnings and Leave Statements in 15 minute increments (i.e., 15, 30, 45), instead of tenths and hundredths of an hour, and also uses a decimal point instead of a colon, which is incorrect. (For example, if I take 10 and a half hours of leave, it should show 10.50, but instead our statements show 10.30. If they insist on reporting minutes instead of tenths, they should at least show 10:30, to be accurate.) Since our The Response Action Framework contracting process adds an unnecessary burden to the project managers, reduces our flexibility to fund work as priorities arise, and minimizes the number of sites each project manager can oversee at a given time.

If it is possible, this program should be scrapped or adjusted to ensure maximum flexibility.

Encourage more interagency meetings and conferences so we get to know the stakeholders and understand their needs and capitalize on their expertise and proposed solutions.

More funding for community outreach work. There should be money directly allocated for Community involvement work instead of apportioned by the region from the general Superfund Budget.

IPADS and IPHONES for work.

Administrative requirements seem to be burdensome in general, but they also ensure there's a minimal amount of impropriety while maintaining accountability and fairness. Impartiality, public trust and equal voice all come with some overhead. That said, telework (although convenient for my family) needs to be revisited and pared back because trying to coordinate without meetings and virtually isn't working as well as being in the office.

At the HQ level there seems to be very little interaction with states - this seems to occur predominately at the EPA regional level. The local communities (e.g. watch groups, water utilities, etc.) and private sector (via associations, e.g. AWWA), seem to have more interaction at the EPA HQ level. Individuals who get recognition and awards from states and associations should get bonuses or promotions (or at least be able to keep their jobs).

EPA used to have published ???Rules of Customer Service???. These need to be reincorporated, e.g. ???Return all phone calls by the next business day. Respond to all email within 2-3 business days. Respond to all written inquiries within 5-10 business days. Use proper titles and greetings. Use professional looking profile pictures while in business attire or none at all. etc.???

Contract out more IT services, for cloud computing for networking, storage and application services. E.g., move it from RTP and OEI to e.g. Seattle and Microsoft. More use of video conferencing when teleworking. Foster more robust dialog with industry and associations. It??d also be nice to see prisoners / corrections & communities cleaning up not just roadsides, but more along rail tracks and water ways ??? especially in the winter when missing vegetation & foliage makes everything unsightly. A national ???clean up your community day??? is needed, or if existing, it needs to be promoted better.

There is a race to be smart. Smart water, smart power, smart lighting, smart cities, smart cars, etc. Leverage data analytics, sensor technology and advanced metering (infrastructure) at the state and local levels to inform regulations, promote conservation and increase resiliency, e.g. for drinking water, air monitoring, farm runoff, etc. Also, GIS data with time and date stamps is under analyzed in almost every aspect of society (in my opinion).

Rotate staff to attend interagency meetings, and allow more staff to participate & co-chair working groups. Assign HQ staff to coordinate w/ specific regions AND specific states. Create more MOUs, MOAs, and IAGs with other departments and agencies. Formally rotate staff amongst more and other D/A for developmental career assignments at the HQ and regional levels.

More citizen science, and training of agency employees, universities, and schools on citizen science. There also has to be balance in everything, oversight and trust that we are professionals dedicated to mission.

Some documents require up to 7 people to concur before it is signed. This could be reduced to 4 concurrences and not affect the quality of the document and would greatly speed up the process of doing our jobs.

Our regional office works directly with our stakeholders (state, local, tribes, and the private sector). We have asked them how we can assist them and have implemented those suggestions. Our state and local partners also ask for money, but with years of cut backs, we don't have any grant money to give them. Our state and local partners don't have the employees or funds to take on our program under delegation. They rely on us to enforcement the regulations.

We let them tell us what they need from us. We meet regularly with our partners and try to implement the ideas they provide to us. We have an open line of communication with them.

Yes, move people from Headquarters out to the regions. Headquarters is detached from our state, local, tribal, and private sector partners. The regions are the boots on the ground. There have been many times that a Headquarters person will ask us to put together a report and then mention it is on their PARS to get it done. They aren't doing the work. It's like they are making up things for us to do to justify their existence. I have known people who have done details at Headquarters and they confirmed that the number of employees there could be drastically reduced and it wouldn't impact the work EPA does at all. Many times, they pull or put together reports that are not accurate. The regions then have to spend time to figure out what they want and correct the reporting to be accurate. If you are looking to consolidate regions, travel costs need to be considered. We don't have the money to fly people all over. Regions 1, 2, and 3 are located very close to one another and all have a high cost of living. Not to mention Headquarters is in the area. Combining a couple of them to save money would still keep people within driving distance to our partners.

Please institute an electronic records keeping system. We have a way to preserve emails. Our records center takes hardcopy files. So, if a facility emails a lengthy report to me, I have to print it out to send it to the records center for preservation. They will take cd/dvd but prefer not to. Superfund has an electronic records keeping system. Can we expand it or some version of it to other programs?

We don't have any other federal agencies or states that do what my program does. The states, locals, and tribes don't have the people or money to take on delegation of the program. They have also expressed to us that they don't have any interest in doing so.

Use the Kaizen LEAN process to identify ways to improve efficiency and reduce costs. This is working really well in Region 7.

The process to make changes to the official Agency Financial System, Compass, or any system governed by OCFO's OTS is very inefficient. A ticket must be completed and if considered a system change instead of a bug, then another form must be prepared by the user. The change then goes through three separate committees to prioritize the change. Any committee can reject the change. Changes that are rejected will then rotate to the bottom of the list and the cycle will begin again. It seems more items are added yet little gets completed. If the issue actually makes it through the committees, it is then put on the developer's "to do" list. Sometimes it takes the developer less than two or three hours to make the change, yet it has taken months even years to get to that point.. Many employees have attempted to address concerns by complaining on various surveys, yet the process remains the same. We are told to do more with less, yet system changes that will make our jobs more efficient will take years, if ever, to occur.

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Having GS15s and 14s responsible for being Contract Officer Representatives or Project Officers. This responsibility should be a centralized function in each program office at the GS 11-13 level.

By funding partnerships instead of making them "other duties as assigned". Train program and project managers in developing partnership, EPA/State agreements, Inter-agency agreements, etc.

By seeking their feedback on the value and impact of our programs and project deliverables. Agreeing on strategic goals and objectives and then monitoring and measuring results in attaining them.

YES! Make buy-outs and early-outs available to all who are eligible and volunteer to take one. Buy-outs in the past have been restricted to specific job series. Why keep people working who voluntarily want to leave the Agency?

I think the ethanol mandate should be cancelled. Including ethanol in gasoline reduces the efficiency (mpg) of internal combustion engines. E85 gets only ~70% of the mileage that pure gasoline gets. It diverts corn for food to use in gasoline increasing the cost of food. It requires more energy to produce than does petroleum.

Yes; MS 10; SharePoint; more training on how to use EPA Cloud.

Task WH OSTP and NSC with preparing annual budget request memos so that research planning and budget processes are integrated instead of stove-piped as they are now.

YES: universal access to employee benefits. Federal employee benefits and ethics rules discriminate against households led by domestic partners and/or couples in common law marriages. The U.S. is the only federal government that doesn't offer universal access to employee benefits. Canada, France, Japan, et al. and most large corporations provide benefits based on very broad definitions of eligible family members. Only the U.S. restricts access based on traditional family definitions (as amended by the Supreme Court decisions). OPM should broaden access to employees who are in domestic partnerships or common law marriages (as recognized by the states where they live). OPM should create a national registry so employees can register to obtain benefits based on their individual and family needs. As it is now, opposite sex partners can obtain FEHB benefits because there's no burden of proof for them to show that they are married. Same-sex domestic partners are denied FEHB benefits because OPM doesn't recognize common law marriages. Office of Government Ethics treats same-sex domestic partners as non-relatives or family members. This creates a double standard in terms of equal protection under the law and contradicts EPA's EEO policies.

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1) In business timing is critical and it has been my hope for many years that Government would learn this simple lesson. Seems the way to 'fix' it is to continue to spend money rather than become efficient. Currently, the EPA Superfund program is undergoing a revamp of its contracting mechanisms due to former leadership that transferred to EPA Contracting from DOE then decided that we needed to 'fix' our contracting to be like that at DOE (if you take a look at our ethics or contracting training you will note that one, if not the largest cases of fraud and abuse ever prosecuted was through the DOE/USACE, Mr. Khan). The switch in contracting cost more as you have to pay money to build another type of contract and in this case train EPA project managers to now do more tasks that are of a contracting nature and not the actual 'cleanup' however a 'easy way out' is to utilize the USACE (for an overhead price and loss of some Site control issues and being vulnerable to the same type of scenario that Mr. Khan brought to the table). Basically, the cost of the current contract that was the "problem" will just be switched over USACE or you slow down the projects to a crawl and realize time is money and it will cost you more. Idea to drive down cost: You provide funding in the Winter rather than in May or June to do construction in the Summer and Fall: buying contractors late drives up the price and usually leaves you with the 'left over' contractors or really drives up the price to get a quality construction crew. If funding must come late, provide budget for two to three seasons thus you can attract quality contractors at a reasonable price over the term. The current way of business cost more because of HOW it is being done not the current contract and changing to another contract does not correct the problem (it will slow work down and cost even more!!!). By the way, the fella that sent us down this path to "fix" things left after 18 months. 2) Gold King Panic has now put in place a process, Consult Package, that requires approval from DC all the way down to individual supervisor for a Project Manager to do any work involving an adit or mine waste. That is crazy. One adit in 39 years and that adit had a history of 'blowing out' several times without any personnel 'touching' it. How is it crazy? I have two adit portals with free flowing fluid but like mines tend to do when they are over 100 years old, the entrances are beginning to collapse and if I don't do something to mitigate that problem a full collapse can occur and mine fluid will back up and basically create the scenario we are trying to avoid. For over a year I have sent Memos and Draft Consult Packages to get whatever standard or 'hoop' I have to jump through to get permission to lay HDPE pipe in the entrances so that IF a full collapse occurs, the mine fluid will continue to flow thus avoiding a problem. I have been asking, if not begging, to take preventative measures to avoid potential for a huge problem. I might have resolution or not within the next few weeks but if this goes poorly it will have been due to this absurd delay.

the only one that takes more time than it should it timekeeping. We are still working with 3 systems at R7

Many times it comes down to EPA not saying simply there is no zero as a cleanup standard. States will demand you reach a cleanup goal for a contaminant that is lower than the federal level or they will not "sign off" on Site closure and thus take over Operations and Monitoring of a Site per agreements. Interestingly enough when the State is working on a non-NPL cleanup or has the Site lead for a NPL cleanup, they will waive for a higher standard for the same contaminant (EPA should be documenting these instances and using them in negotiations.... If it is good enough for a State cleanup or State led cleanup, why isn't it good enough for a EPA led cleanup). Note: EPA tends to pay for the State Superfund (other programs too) oversight personnel via agreements so that might present a bit of the reason for continuing to prolong sites. EPA must learn how to collect information to negotiate better and be willing to utilize leverage or change potential conflicts of interest scenarios.

Continue to foreground collaborative partnerships where all actors are engaged and grapple together with tradeoffs for their community, and creating solutions collaboratively. The urban waters program is one such example.

IF provided budget then we can do work and provided that budget is in the provided in the Winter we can get better prices and accomplish more. In addition, we can gain more confidence from all parties as we can include them in planning (not just at the last minute for a project that may not happen because budget is late) and be able to notify the public in advance about what we plan to do rather the last minute because we finally got money and no just what projects of the list of things we can actually have budget to complete (last thing you want to do is tell the public all the design you have planned as you may not get any money to do work or enough money to get all the work done and that promotes a poor view of EPA and the State).

Develop a cadre of highly skilled community engagement specialists who understand can implement the most collaborative end of the range of public engagement, including alternative dispute resolution and mediation. With the feds, states and tribes, the regulated community, and the public working together, so much more can be accomplished that actually works. However, it takes a commitment of people resources to do it right. Not a quick fix, and not partisan.

Besides those previously listed. You want to reduce personnel, okay. Find the portions of the Agency that have a finite work assignment and complete the task as when the job is done, the worker needs to find another job or retire. An Example: Take the worst Sites in the Country and clean them up and thus the need for personnel to do the job is no longer there. One does not backfill a job that is complete. Find the Sites that can be completed for the lowest dollar and start there and keep moving until you run out of Sites. As Sites are completed then you can use more of that budget to accelerate completion of the next level of Sites.

Fix the timekeeping system and rules for paper records and get our VPN more up to speed so we don't lose time when we are mobile. Add telecommuting to the list of allowable alternative work locations so that passenger vehicle and public transport time can be put to good use.

Apple. No desk phone and no desk computer.... everything mobile and synced (calendar on phone auto loads to your laptop and vice-versa... boss or any party can text you or send a calendar invite and it is on all your devices). Face-time for webinar/training/meetings. Having lots of tech and that tech not being compatible from device to device is an issue and you have less issues with the Apple operating system and virus problems. Want less Enforcement and keep a clean environment? Be where your customers are and help them with compliance and that means mobile tech (you can face time your supervisor if you need) but there is no replacement for being where the work is located.

It's called google, gmail, dropbox, evernote. Please give us back our access to what works.

Co-location of personnel into offices located near the State Government counter-parts. Example: I work in the Helena, Montana Office and my primary Site work is located 18 miles from the office (3.5 hours max travel distance to my other two Sites of responsibility), approximately 4 miles to my State counter-parts, and I work often with the Lewis & Clark County and the USFS both are located within 10 miles of this location. Don't want an EPA office here? Okay, co-locate me with the USFS for 3 days a week and Telecommute (work from home) 2 days a week (keep a local IT person though to service the staff you maintain in this area... not some out source IT, Government sensitive documents). For training, much of the training is on-line or via Video Tele-Conferencing but if you had to you could send training staff to the EPA Staff located in each state. You will save on facility cost, Travel cost (every flight from Denver to another state to do work.... you drive a GSA and can do more field work from the State in which the work is located... cost isn't even close), and salaries (Helena Staff vs Denver Staff 6-7% per employee.... Nation wide?)

use the federal partnership model as a regular thing rather than an experiment. There are several to use as models, including urban waters. However, they can't be voluntary and need accountability to be built in, otherwise they become optional.

Be where your customer is located. If you want to sell cars in Omaha, why be located in Miami? Why be in Atlanta when your work is in South Florida? Why Denver when your work area of responsibility is in Utah or North Dakota? Big consolidated Regional Offices in the most expensive real-estate in the Country as a good business model? Paying staff more to live in those expensive places? See the "United States Environmental Protection Agency Region 10 Field Office Study dated November 2006 prepared by: [REDACTED B6] and Field Office Managers and Staff". By the way for Emergency Response personnel, IF you choose not to 'outpost' that is accepting a delayed or longer response time. Some Regions 'outpost' OSCs and there response times are significantly better and one might wish to review the NCP to see if a legal issue might be avoided. If you are on the scene faster and thereby start preventing things from becoming worse, it beats showing up hours after things have gone from bad to worse. Added benefit for local/state responders is they know who there Federal contacts are, what to expect and what the OSC can bring as a benefit to a response.... and they know that they will be there that day.

Already stated - better public engagement. The standards are set by the International Association of Public Participation and the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation. Look at their spectrum of public engagement. It will not shock you that most government engagement is traditional and does not create solid lasting, collaborative solutions.

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There are several small offices within my AAship (OLEM) that have Divisions of 4 or 5 people. The general understanding is that Division Directors are supposed to supervise at least 15 people. There are currently three Division Directors in our office of 26, with 5 direct reports to the Office Director.

We should make sure that funding to states, tribes, and communities are not cut. Many states rely on EPA funding to staff their environmental departments. Cleanup programs should be funded at adequate levels, because local governments and tribes often do not have the necessary resources to cleanup contamination, protecting their citizens from dangerous pollution.

I think that we should continue to pursue our policy of not fining companies that voluntarily acknowledge a spill or audit irregularity. By volunteering information such as that, they are reducing the amount of work on the Agency and are also proactively being good corporate citizens by protecting the environment and human health, not to mention avoiding fines that they would incur by not notifying us. We should publicize these companies when they do this.

Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville, NC has an Environmental Division which monitors and assesses the impact on the local environment due to base operations. It would be great for the US EPA to partner with the base so both could share their perspectives and experiences to lessen the bases' environmental footprint.

Many state agencies allow inspectors to use electronic forms that are instantly transmitted to their offices. Not being in a program that does this, I'm not sure how common it is in the Agency.

Reduce the constant pressure in ORD and NERL to put out peer-reviewed scientific publications in prestigious journals at the expense of providing assistance and support to states and / or completing congressionally mandated work. The EPA should not be a place for scientists to advance their personal careers and agendas by pushing out publications. Although publications are important for maintaining the EPA's scientific credibility and expertise, it should not come at the expense of supporting the agency and it's clients (states, local communities, private sector, etc.). There are managers at various levels in ORD and NERL who push scientific publications, evaluate employees / divisions based on publication counts, or focus almost entirely on publication statistics (number of citations, peer-reviewed publications per FTE). This creates an environment that punishes the scientists who focus on performing congressionally mandated tasks, advancing the mission of the organization, or providing technical and scientific expertise to states and other clients. It also creates an environment that rewards scientists who divert agency resources to focus on pet projects outside the scope of what the EPA is mandated to do.

I would address these by restructuring the management at all levels of ORD to refocus the mission on performing congressionally-mandated science and providing scientific and technical support to clients. Eliminate the strong "publish or perish" culture and publication-based criteria and look at all of employee's accomplishments. In particular, evaluate employees based on how the employee has assisted the agency with performing it's congressionally-mandated duties and how the employee has provided assistance to clients (states, local communities, tribes, private companies) rather than publication or citation counts. The EPA is NOT an academic institution and should not pretend to be one.

We already do a lot to provide support for the states and local communities. In particular, the EPA provides a centralized scientific and technical resource to assist states and communities in dealing with pressing environmental issues, responding to environmental disasters, and assisting states and the private sector with following the regulations in an efficient, cost-effective manner. EPA (particularly the science) should refocus on how to better provide support to clients and stakeholders. We also provide a repository of methods, instruments, and expertise that is available to states to support them, and we have actively been involved in states that have asked for our support.

We need to better advertise the EPA (particularly the scientists) as a resource available to assist stakeholders. Due to past relationships, some states view us as partners, whereas others see us in an adversarial role. We should try to focus on developing partnerships with all the states and regions. We need to make them aware that we are available to provide assistance if they have questions, concerns, or issues that they need to deal with.

See Q2.

Reduce the dependency on contractors - while it is important to have some contract support for critical tasks, contractors should not be substituting for federal employees. Federal employees should use contractors to support their work or provide expertise not otherwise available, not to do their work for them. Federal employees should pull more of the weight themselves rather than having expensive contractors do it.

Streamline the purchasing process. In some cases, purchase requests take months (or longer) to process, and by the time they are processed the needs change or the items are no longer required. Focus on making it easier for EPA employees to purchase mission-critical equipment, while also providing auditing to make sure resources are not wasted. Reduce the pattern of having contractors purchase equipment for EPA using contract dollars. Although contract resources should be available, major equipment purchases should go through EPA, not contractors. Do not waste contract dollars on buying superfluous equipment because the money is available and it is easier than going through EPA channels. Rather, make the EPA channels easier to navigate.

Reduce the number of administrative staff and personnel in ORD. Focus on fulfilling the core requirements rather than trying to make jobs for the sake of making jobs. Too many administrative personnel make it more difficult (not easier) to get work done and are a waste on multiple levels.

We should have a centralized IT system (with a single sign in) responsible for all the subsystems. Having to deal with multiple different subsystems (Lotus Notes, People Plus, SharePoint, Concur, etc. etc.) that all use different credentials.

Make it easier for EPA researchers to communicate publically about their work. Although it is important that all communications be reviewed, we should be encouraging EPA researchers to share their work with the public. After all, taxpayer dollars are going to support the EPA research, the taxpayers should know what the EPA is doing with that money. This will also help to garner support for the EPA (provided the work being done is actually worthwhile). We have been involved in multiple campaigns, projects, etc. to support states or local communities and have been extremely limited in how we can communicate our work to those communities.

For ORD (or individual laboratories), focus on one or two key research areas important to public health and focus on those. Try to stick to congressionally mandated areas of research (i.e. Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, etc.). Research that does not support one of these key areas should be considered very carefully. Right now we are spread too thin, in too many different directions. We need to refocus on key areas and assess what the needs are in those areas, and then focus on what we need to do to meet those needs well. We also need to foster collaboration, both within the agency, between the agency and states, and across agencies. We have duplicate resources by different groups in different divisions / labs, as well as duplicate expertise or people focusing on the same problems (although different aspects) that do not communicate or are not aware of each other's work.

Current roadmaps, RAPS / STRAPS, etc. are overly broad and do not communicate well what each organization's focus is.

We should also maintain collaborations and contacts with other scientific agencies. For example, EPA and USGS (for water) or EPA and NASA (for air), or EPA and NOAA (for air and water) should all be aware of who is doing what work. It is important that we retain sufficient expertise within EPA to understand the work done by other agencies, how it affects the work done within our agency, and communicate that work with others inside the EPA.

Rather than focusing on eliminating all EPA research that shares themes with other agencies, we should focus on increasing cross-agency communication and collaboration, and make sure we have expertise within the EPA to capitalize on work done by other agencies (i.e. USGS stream monitoring, NASA satellite air quality data, etc.).

No specifics at this time.

Offices are more interested in spending the funds they have and in maintaining those levels of funds, not to "lose" them, than in saving money to the American People. Managers openly ask or order to spend the money as quickly as possible, even if we don't need those services. Managers promoted based on love for our country, knowledge, skills, abilities, and consciousness about the large government debt, instead of aptitude to "manage by fear" would solve this and many other problems. There is no way to produce effectively in this environment.

I believe Administrator Pruitt is right on target: Why do we maintain this inflated sense about ourselves thinking that we know better than all states, and that states cares less about their environments than us? We should send as many programs as possible to states, local communities, and tribes to be managed by the people that are actually knowing what is going on first-hand. Private sector will also be more dispersed all over the country promoting economic growth, job creation, and innovation, instead of all being concentrated in Washington, DC

Attitude and transparency are key. We need to stop "talking down" to them. They stop listening as soon as we adopt that arrogant attitude that they need to learn, when in reality it is us that need to learn from them. Being more humble and more understanding and again, delegating a lot of the work we do to them will improve their environment and will reduce waste, fraud, and abuse.

I strongly support putting America first, and stop sending money to countries that keep polluting and financing international organizations as the UNFCCC that has a large number of "scientists" who only dedicate to travel all over the world adding nothing to knowledge on climate change and other issues, actually distorting the truth, and paying their lavish lives with the American worker taxes.

When it comes to enforcement, let's start by focusing only on what is purely about environmental protection. EPA became too political, too abusive, and that shrank the economy and reduce our capacity to protect the environment. Let's bring back costs to our analysis, and let's stop inflating the benefits.

I worked with the Department of Energy and private sector in promoting American environmental technology. Americans were at great disadvantage because it took years in getting approval, energy stars, avoiding penalties, and so on before being able to promote, and commercialize our innovative technology. China, Japan, Germany, even Brazil do not have the barriers that we have. It is impossible to innovate with so many regulations and threats from an Agency that became rogue. Once our "survivors" are ready for the market, the product is already obsolete.

You need to have better leadership in the Agency. The problem does not reside on the scientists, engineers, and other professionals, but on the fact that top management has been formed for the last two decades based on "who you know," instead of "what you know." With such level of incompetence at top levels of leadership at EPA, knowledge have been stunt, innovation is dying, collaboration is only among their equals: Nothing good can be obtained. You need to clean house, first.

America has a surplus of innovators, but unfortunately the surplus of incompetent bureaucrats is even larger. Reduce the latter one, or better eliminate them, and our country will have a large menu of new technologies, knowledge, efficiencies and opportunities that will be able to select. The wall that separate us from all of these existent potential opportunities is thick and tall in the current environment.

We now have a travel group who has us put information into a travel form, they then take that travel form and populate information into a Travel Authorization (hence, information is being entered twice), and then the TA gets approved. Anytime we need to make a change (like in schedule) we have to enter all of the information into the form again rather than just calling and telling the person to make a change. We used to be able to have a person that worked directly in the program enter the information directly in the TA so it skipped a whole step in the process. This is very inefficient and effective.

In addition, back in 1995 the enforcement programs were all split out from the other programs and it has made things very ineffective and inefficient. Currently we have people that do more "outreach and compliance assistance" that work in the programs, while having others that are completely focused on "enforcement" in a totally different Office. This is difficult when the program is so small to begin with, that resources are having to be split in different offices when it makes sense to keep the people combined (i.e., RMP program, EPCRA program, oil program, UST program, etc.).

Lastly, there are a lot of internal programs that make it difficult for us to do our jobs (these internal EPA programs are more like obstacles than anything). A lot of internal programs have forgotten that we, the EPA, are their customers (e.g. Quality Assurance Program). It feels like it is more like we are trying to satisfy all their requirements in order for us to get our jobs done.

Continue to work with states, tribes, and locals as partners and leveraging those program areas where we each have our strengths.

Consider the state, tribes, and locals as our partners. As for the public, we all need to remember why we are working in the government and that ultimately we are responsible for reporting to the communities we represent.

None at this time.

I believe some of the dbase systems we have could be more modernized, but not sure if we have the funding to support changes.

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1. Front-line Supervisors need to critically assess their staffing levels and workloads on a routine basis. Staffing levels should not be maintained at historical levels just because. Supervisors should be looking at trends to see if work has increased or decreased in certain areas and be able to shift FTEs appropriately. At a minimum, this assessment should take place every time an FTE is lost.
2. Workload should be compared within a unit (peer-to-peer) and outside the unit (other regions, states, tribes, private) to determine appropriate work expectations and FTE numbers.
3. Programs that are obsolete, are not required by law, or are duplicative within EPA or another federal agency should be eliminated. For example: Environmental Justice, Energy Star, Children's Environmental Health, Making a Visible Difference, Field Operations Guidance, etc. Many of these programs are staffed by engineers, scientists, and environmental specialists whose skills and experience could be used to fill other agency needs.

Some of the trainings are completely useless. Any person with common sense should know the material.

EPA is already accustomed to partnering with states, tribes, and local communities because many of EPA's programs are administered by the local agencies. However, there are a number of things that the EPA can do to improve on those relationships and take the term "partnership" to a whole other level:

1. The EPA needs to truly understand that our states and tribes are on the front lines and often have the primary responsibility for implementing environmental programs.
2. The EPA needs to understand that our states and tribes are staffed with highly qualified scientists and engineers dedicated to protecting human health and the environment. Often, their staff is just as qualified or more qualified than EPA staff because they have first-hand implementation knowledge and they possess local knowledge (knowledge of their ecosystems, their industries, their economics, their politics, etc.).
3. The EPA needs to include our states and tribes in the initial stages of rule and policy making. Their input could be invaluable and help the EPA to avoid future implementation or litigation pitfalls.
4. The EPA needs to improve technical assistance to the states and tribes. Each new regulation creates some sort of training need for staff. During the rule development process, the EPA should account for these training needs and set aside resources to develop and/or update guidance and provide training opportunities for the states and tribes. This needs to be provided in a timely manner because once the rule is final, the states/tribes will be faced with compliance deadlines and reporting requirements.
5. The EPA needs to ensure that there are adequate resources to get the job done, but also ensure that the resources are being used properly. If a state/tribe is not using grant funds appropriately, that money should be reduced and redirected to those that are.

Ultimately, two things need to happen, in my opinion.

(1) The EPA needs to quit looking at our work in a hierarchical manner with the EPA at the top. Even though the EPA has an oversight role for most of the environmental programs, we are still co-implementers.

Decentralizing the agency would help EPA to provide better customer service to the states, tribes, local communities, regulated community, and the public at large.

1. Why have Offices like OECA in headquarters telling regional offices and states how to monitor compliance and enforcement activities? Regional compliance/enforcement offices are way more in tune with what is going on in their regions. Regional staff are on the ground - they understand the industries, the states, the tribes, the politics, the local economies, etc. Headquarters staff, such as OECA, only know see the numbers within a computer program and often the data within that program is in correct or out of date.

2. EPA should incorporate more FIELD OFFICES!!! Region 10 and Region 8 have successfully incorporated field offices into their region. Field offices are closer to their work which allows them to know their projects more intimately, no the locals better (states, tribes, industries, the public, the politics, etc.). Field offices reduce travel time and expenses and often reduce FTE costs because they are in smaller, less populated locations. Further, having field offices helps EPA to develop trust relationships with the locals. These trust relationships are imperative to developing a collaborative working relationship especially when working on contentious issues. Even from a self-centered point of view, the intel that can be gathered at the local level from a field office is invaluable to the agency (ex: the military knows that human intel is its most valuable source of intel). Please see Region 10's "Field Office Study" from November 6, 2006 for more information on the effectiveness and cost savings of field offices.

3. Important side note - Region 8's RA/DRA chose to abolish the Montana Field Office on December 11, 2016. This was done with little support within the region and no support in the State of Montana. The Montana Department of Environmental Quality, the Montana Department of Agriculture, Montana Tribes, local city/county governments, Montana politicians, Montana industries, and the general public all oppose this action. The Montana Office has a 37 year history of environmental success stories and developing working relationships with the state, tribes, and locals all for the benefit of the region and the agency.

Allow more telework. People are more efficient and more available via cell phone.

1. There are entirely too many managers within the Regions and at Headquarters. In the regions, there are front-line supervisors, program directors, deputy assistant regional administrators, a deputy regional administrator, and a regional administrator. In Headquarters, one office may have a program manager, program deputy director, program director, associate assistant administrator, principal deputy assistant administrator, and the assistant administrator.
2. Reduce the size of Headquarters and have them work/coordinate with the regions more often. Why have redundant staff, management, and attorneys in Headquarters weighing in on regional issues/topics? The regions have more than enough expertise and experience to make appropriate decisions. Further, the regions have established working relationships within the region and have more knowledge of local players, issues, and constraints. Headquarters should be the overarching point of contact for congress, the president, and the regions (senior leadership within the regions can work directly with the administrator and his senior leadership/advisors). Headquarters can spearhead things like the budget, rule making, and policy development.
3. EPA's current organizational structure is slow to respond, bureaucratic and ultimately costly. Eliminating layers of management and staff will allow decisions to be made at the appropriate level, improve performance, and likely increase staff's engagement.

Why does each office have an HR, training and a budget person? Can't that be centralized? These people are typically underworked from my experience.

The agency needs to continually self-access and see if processes, technologies, programs, FTEs are out-of-date or no longer needed. This assessment needs to begin at the lowest possible level and not only supported, but replicated by senior leadership. This will keep agency expenses down and help us to operate in the most efficient manner.

BYOD- Bring your own device. Why can't I check my EPA email on my cell phone? It's a time-saver and a money-saver for the government.

If there are current EPA programs that better align with other federal agencies, EPA should step aside and allow the other agencies to be the lead for those programs. This will allow EPA to better focus on its mission to protect human health and the environment. It will also ensure that federal funding gets to the proper agency, are not split amongst numerous agencies, and therefore, can be more effectively used.

Follow the idea of other agencies with more teleworking and "hotel-ing" so you save office space.

The EPA needs to take a critical look at their contracting processes and see if there is a better way. Superfund contracting has been changed to pattern a failed DOE process. Some EPA programs give their money directly to other federal agencies to award (i.e. Army Corps, IHS, BOR) and these agencies aren't the experts. EPA should award EPA money to ensure the money is spent on the appropriate projects.

EPA has already begun the process of becoming a more mobile workforce. I truly believe that increasing the ability for employees to telework would open the door for sharing space while in the office. I know several companies that offer this "hoteling" where you can go into the office and reserve a cubicle for the day. I work in the information technology section and could easily do most of my job remotely, and the times I would need to be in the office, I would have no issue using a common workspace.

Virtual Desktop Infrastructure is something that EPA and Region 1 (my region) has done substantial testing with. I know the use of this would allow remote workers to function as though they are in the office while maintaining security by not having government information on the remote computer.

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Federal Acquisition Regulations! While there needs to be regulations for contracting/purchasing, the FAR can sometimes be restrictive. As an example, there should be more of a push to make awards to small and socio-economic concerns. We do have set-asides but we should loosen further to help these type of firms do business with the Government.

RTP (EPA Finance Center in Research Triangle Park) needs to electronically interface with EAS (EPA Acquisition System) and with CDW (Computer Data Warehouse). Right now, RTP does everything manually leading to financial errors, inaccurate records, and downtime.

Not a Scientist. But, I believe they need to take more of an active role rather than the USEPA taking the lead. Appears we take the lead too many time and this does not incentivize these groups to lead the efforts.

Listen. Be trustworthy. Use science (and joint fact finding if you can't agree on the science).

Quite simply - HONESTY!!!! Once you are not forthcoming, credibility tends to be lost and at times, unrecoverable.

Yes, allow contracting personnel to make decisions on how best to procure items. Do more regional purchasing for economies. As an example, years ago I used to purchase one expensive IT item and so did all of the other EPA Offices. Anything we need to purchase, should be purchased one time versus multiple contracts for the same item by multiple offices. The price for 1,000 each of anything will always be less than the price of 100 each times 10.

Also, the EPA has multiple Gyms for its employees. Now, that is a nice perk but it is used by a small number of employees and the price tag is high. I see where we have started to not renew. It needs to be done across the country. In our region alone, we could save almost \$90,000 a year. This gym subsidizing and paying for fitness instructors to provide classes needs to be terminated! If someone wants to go to a gym, use your own money and do it on your own time. There are abuses of time related to the use of a Gym. The Prima Donna's who expect this will complain but that is too bad! Make them pay the full load.

Another area is grants. These grants go to states and there are times they do not want it. We continue to pretty much force it down their throats. This way, the money will still come every year. These grants need to be individually looked at by someone independent of the EPA.

Another area is outreach. We do a ton of outreach events at trade shows. Of course, we get charged for the booth and sometime for the chairs and a carpet for the booth. If we are to be charged for attending one of these, it should be at no cost to the Government and the tax payers. One thing that troubled me was outreach at events that can be considered primo. Why do we need to do outreach at race horse tracks etc? Almost forgot, why do we need outreach at a Flower Show? We have to pay for the space and the plants to make it look presentable to a tune of money that is high.

See response to Question 1.

At time, we do not seem to learn from any lessons of the past. We need to start a mind-set of applying lessons learned to most of our daily functions.

See response to Question 1.

There is always a savings when you utilize a shared responsibility mindset. Simply by making multi-regional purchases we could save money and administrative effort which, also equates to money.

Purchase smartly, utilize in-house capabilities versus spending tax payer money to receive a service. You should not have to do this but, there needs to be a culture of self responsibility by our staff. Each of us has to look in the mirror and say we are doing what we are supposed to be doing and completing it correctly and efficiently. There is some waste and it has become normal. Funny to see people want to purchase something and not care about what it will cost. Nobody would do that with their personnel checking!

See response to Question 1.

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We are unable to move appropriated funding to contractors to complete core Agency work. We need to hire more contract officers and streamline the process. Contractors are unable to predict workflow from the Agency, plan their hiring and resources for the year, and sometimes need to lay off junior staff with critical expertise.

I do not work directly with tribes, but for many years we have had a good working relationship with states and the private sector. We can of course always improve, but it would be a shame if the success we have achieved in this area were not recognized as part of this survey process.

One example we of a previous achievement, which could be a model for future improvements, is technical cooperation with state counterparts to make it possible for industry to report the same information (e.g., on emissions) to states and EPA simultaneously, thereby ensuring the minimum burden for reporters, and consistency of information for states and EPA.

States, tribes, local communities, the regulated community, and the public at large depend on timely and high quality EPA scientific information and data. In many cases, EPA stakeholders do not have the resources to collect the data themselves, or prefer consistency in approach across the country.

Again, I think this survey misses the opportunity to ask for examples of successes with respect to costs and efficiencies, which could be replicated across the Agency.

The administrative processes for time sheet management, employee travel, and allocating extramural funding, are inefficient and could benefit from modernization.

We currently have good working relationships with other parts of the federal government, such as EIA, USDA, USFS, USGS, and DOD. Senior EPA support for these relationships, via signed Memoranda of Understanding, would do a great deal for supporting cooperative work and making sure that missions and activities are aligned.

The private sector, and agencies such as DOD, are more open to providing mid-career educational and training opportunities to improve the effectiveness of staff, learn new ideas, promote morale, and incentivize retention. These opportunities would do a great deal for the health of the agency during an era of hiring freezes and reduced budgets. Similarly, a more encouraging environment for details & secondments to other agencies, the Hill, States, and international organizations would also be welcome.

Throughout EPA, administrative support functions lack a basic customer service focus and require too many people to implement those functions. This is true of both OARM staff throughout the agency and their counterparts in the Regions and Labs. The leaders and managers of these functions have long resisted any effort to streamline their organizations and question the need to streamline their processes. Efforts to improve the services provided by these organizations have always been thwarted by "digging in" and outlasting the political appointees attempting to improve and increase the efficiency of service delivery. In my own experience, this was true for both the combined 16 years of the Clinton and Bush administrations.

Should the Trump administration hope to make improvements in this area, it needs to not rely on OARM to study or implement the proposed improvements. Surely, these organizations need to provide input into changes, but left in charge they will drag their feet and preserve their fiefdoms as long as necessary.

As stated previously, the organizations lack a customer service focus, but worse than that, they implement the federal requirements they are in charge of so rigidly, so lacking in concern for good outcomes or common sense, that if EPA's regulatory programs interfaced with states or regulated industry in a similar fashion, members of Congress from both sides of the aisle would be dragging the Administrator in front of oversight hearings on a frequent and regular basis.

Customer service within the regulatory programs is an afterthought.

Using the private sector to help with site cleanups and protecting the environment is good, but we should choose companies that are environmentally conscious. Selecting companies that have a good public track record with promoting things like recycling, green initiatives, and other pro-environment things help businesses and reflect positively on the agency. We should employ private sector resources that are good examples. The public will see we not only support businesses, but we also ???double dip?? by employing the environmentally conscious while being environmentally conscious ourselves.

Idea for reducing costs:

I recently updated my life insurance beneficiaries with my local HR office. Our current process is completely inefficient and not cost effective. Under the current process you have to fill out form OMB No. 3206-0136 and MAIL it to the shared services center. If anything is not filled out correctly the shared services center MAILES it back to you and you have to pick it up at the post office (added inconvenience) and re-mail it. If they EPA has 15,000 employees (source was the Washington Post, I am approximating the numbers) and each employee updates their life insurance once per year then it costs the agency $15,000 \times \$6.65$ (USPS 2 day priority mail small envelope price) = \$99,750 per year if each employee updates their insurance one time. The shared service center's reason for not accepting signed, verified documents (witnesses have to sign when you update your life insurance) was that, they had to be original. It is 2017 and we should be allowed to send HR documents via e-mail. This would reduce agency costs for other things in addition to basic HR updates and make tracking easy. You can digitally sign documents now and all e-mails would come from an epa.gov address. It is wasteful and irresponsible to have this archaic system in place! Not having digital signatures costs taxpayers money!

E-signing documents like the good example provided in question 4. We should be moving away from paper based systems.

In order to save money and be more efficient, EPA could utilize the contracts it put in place and eliminate the duplication of efforts within these contracts. Specifically, the Office of Water (OW) has a number of contracts that overlap some of the services. For example, most of the contracts have a section that says something similar to this, "The contractor shall also provide administrative support in the planning and execution of workshops, conferences, training sessions, symposia and public meetings."

I'm not an environmentalist, I just joined EPA recently and I work on the administrative side. Removing Scott Pruitt as the EPA Administrator is required before we can achieve any improvement on environmental results with our stakeholders. There is no trust between EPA employees and the EPA Administrator. Scott Pruitt has proved that he's more concerned with protecting businesses than protecting the environment. The new posters posted around EPA showing Scott Pruitt shaking hands with coal miners is very demoralizing to EPA employees. The jobs of 20,000 or so coal miners should not take precedent over protecting the earth's environment. I think I can speak for most EPA employees when I say, my children and grandchildren's having access to clean air and water is more important than protecting the jobs of a few thousand coal miners.

Appoint a new EPA Administrator. Scott Pruitt has shown very little respect for the EPA and its mission. If EPA employees don't trust their leadership, how can we convince our stakeholders to trust them. When Donald Trump, Scott Pruitt and Rick Perry came to visit EPA Headquarters a few months ago, they showed up with a group of coal miners and had them on stage. Similar to my comment above, this was very demoralizing to the EPA staff. It made it seem like protecting the jobs of coal miners was EPA's most important mission. Protecting the jobs of coal miners is not part of EPA's mission, that mission comes from the Trump administration and their desire to reward the coal miners who voted for him by a large majority. I'm not an environmentalist, but this was one of the most disgraceful acts I've ever witnessed in my life.

Having technical staff do all the administrative functions for ourselves (records management, travel, timekeeping, data management) which used to be done by administrative support staff in the past interferes with our ability to stay focused on the technical work for which we get paid. The administrative functions are necessary, but it would help to reinvest in more support staff to ensure that scientific and technical personal are not spread thin doing lots of administrative functions which takes us away from our core program, technical and scientific work

The program I work in already has strong relationships and partners with state, tribal and local community partners. We also have strong partnerships with other federal sister agencies. What limits our ability to support states, tribal and local jurisdictions more is our limited staff and limited grant funding. Increasing our budget, rather than decreasing our budget would help us to ensure we maintain and support strong state, tribal and local environmental protection programs. We have cut programs in the past that helped to foster public-private partnerships, pollution prevention and innovation. Providing more resources (staff and funding), not less, to these ends would help us support better environmental results through partnering.

EPA's budget has been declining over the past 17 years and went through a reduction in force with an early retirement buy-out in 2015. Staff and programs are already stretched to deliver customer service to states, tribes and local communities as well as be responsive to the regulated community. We need more staff and grant funding support to be able to do a better job at timely, effective and efficient customer service not less. Staff are already doing the jobs of 2 or more people and are over-whelmed. Reductions in force and funding will not help, but only hinder the EPA to provide quality customer service to the public at large and work closely with our state, tribal, other federal agency and local partners.

I do not actually see untapped opportunities for large scale changes at EPA that involve big reductions in costs. To be more efficient and effective we actually could really benefit from increased support. We have been operating with a budget and reduced staffing for the last 5-7 years. These levels have been insufficient to ensure as high quality technical support and capacity building for our state, tribal and local jurisdictions. Continuing to move forward on ensuring adequate water and clean water is available to all citizens, ensuring that the air we breath is clean, and that the food we eat is clean, and communities are not disproportionately exposed to contaminants requires ongoing support and adequate funding. A healthy economy is depending on a healthy environment. EPA works closely with its state, tribal and local jurisdictions and could do whole lot more to ensure that baseline levels and criteria for clean water, clean air, healthy food, and supporting sustainable and clean energy are available.

Yes, supporting local scale , more biologically diverse agroecosystems that are less reliant upon industrial levels of pesticides, herbicides and fungicides; supporting and creating incentives for more use of renewable energy sources (wind, solar, water) rather than de-regulating and promoting large scale mining of coal and extraction and expansion of oil and gas.

Look at areas where EPA has not yet delegated programs that can be delegated to states (e.g., National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System programs), ensure EPA has adequate funding to pass through the states so that states can develop adequate water quality standards, address required Total Maximum Daily Load Allocations, and implement protective water quality and water resource protection programs; continue to support Tribal approval for receiving EPA approved Treatment As a State, provide ongoing funding and technical assistance to tribes for their development of water quality standards, and for implementing their programs. This isn't about eliminating EPA's role, it's actually about providing more funding and support so that EPA can fulfill its mandates under law to assist the states and tribes to develop protective programs that meet or exceed the minimum requirements at the federal level.

Adopting and supporting the use and application of technically sound rapid functional assessment tools for evaluating compensatory mitigation banks and in-lieu-fee program performance standards. Support evaluation approaches and methods that incorporate environmental costs in accounting for economic impacts. Look to economic markets that are inherently interdependent upon the condition and quality of the environment and find more ways to ensure longer term sustainable and resilient outcomes for humans and the environment. Mitigation Banking and Conservation Banking may be good models to look at in terms of important businesses that exist due to important regulatory requirements and which ultimately will lead to better ecological outcomes for requirements for compensatory mitigation.

I manage grants. For every grant that I manage, I have to go into the IGMS pre-award system and manually download every single file that the recipient has uploaded. It takes between 3 to 10 minutes to do this depending on the amount of documents, file size, recipient. According to quik reports (5/9/17) , EPA has 7125 active grant. A minimum of two people need to access the files for the official record (project officer and grant specialist). Using a minimum of 3 minutes and two people to download, my estimate is that EPA has spent 29.6875 days downloading files. This administrative tasks prevents me from engaging with our partners and providing customer service. There needs to be a download all button to greater reduce the time being wasted on this function. My name is [REDACTED B6]

I would relish an opportunity to discuss this simple fix that would greatly reduce staff time. It is a small update with a enormous benefit.

See number 1

See number 1

see number 1

Updating our IT service. On computer infrastructure in out of date and our programs are not compatible with the latest technology. We are relying on internet explorer that is being phased out and our forcing our partners to have older computer with those systems. We are still using lotus notes for a majority of our functions.

"A manager is a manager is a manger" has been the agency justification of filling management positions to fulfill social economic engineering agendas. Your sex, sexual orientation, race, religion, etc are more important factors than ability to do the job. The agency does not require managers that have technical background, yet these managers are often called upon to improve processes or interpret information. This problem propagates into new new problems. The incompetent manager uses hiring authority to create a buffer of assistant managers and other odd ball management positions--all to mitigate the short-comings of the original manager. Clear goals, real managers, clear priorities, and proper training of staff are a good start.

Clarity, simplicity, and common sense revision of all work processes with genuine listening to input about priorities from private sector. Embed employees/co-locate with our partners/customers. Use of IPA's has historically been used to get rid of problem employees or sometimes as a favor to relocate managers to where they will ultimately retire. IPAs should, rather, be used to develop close relationships and effective partnerships to get work done.

Get rid of non-value management who engage in politics. Get rid of 90% of the Assistant and Deputies--not reassign them---get rid of them. Rotate SES employees immediately and every two years thereafter. The manager is a manager concept is probably applicable to SES employees (but the concept is often extended to first line supervisor) Most SES employees live and die in the same position and create mini empires populated by friends and family. Long term--- convert Regional Administrators to career employees--too much change with every election.

Streamline regulations and remove ambiguity. Without litigation, the Agency would have no where to turn to resolve ambiguous and sometimes conflicting requirements. Bring back common sense.

No. Any attempt would be a facade. Work processes often incorporate subjective determinations or logic that Agency does not publish. Agency has wasted money trying to automate processes over the years and spends a substantial amount of money for rework. Agency is good at reworking email systems and databases, over and over, for little benefit and high cost. But tasking it to improve systems without changing culture and leadership would most likely lead to more written guidance with little practical benefit.

Stop duplicate oversight efforts with States and other Federal Agencies.

No. The Agency has picked the low hanging fruit a long time ago--e.g. double side copying and taking work generated trash home (to increase recycling versus landfill stats at office) are all a done deal. The Agency needs to take a long pause and rework many work processes (after getting rid of non-productive layers of management). Regulations and guidance have ballooned faster than staff can keep up with. Most meaningful work is done by contractors with little retention by the Agency after the contract ends. This probably can practically only be accomplished quickly if you perform a massive reorg to change the culture of the Agency; if a long-term horizon is acceptable.

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Throughout my over thirty-year career at EPA I have not really had problems with administrative requirements, management procedures or other processes. I have been blessed with managers who recognize the need to get the job done and have been very flexible in helping me address any obstacles I may encounter. In my experience, the above listed processes, while sometimes seemingly onerous, are there for a reason. They help ensure that we meet legal and procedural requirements, that we receive proper sign off on actions, and that there is a paper trail to provide accountability. Now that I am a manager, I fully expect my staff to let me know if any of these procedures are negatively impacting their work and I have not had any such complaints. I'm not saying there aren't procedures that could be changed, but I feel that we have already held discussions on that and have already made significant improvements where needed.

I don't know of any in my current office.

Considering that states, tribes, and local communities lack the resources to implement environmental controls and run enforcement programs, it is essential that EPA maintain a strong role. While some states are forward thinking in promoting clean and renewable energy and protecting their citizens, others lack the vision and frankly ability to do so. It is erroneous to think that pollution respects boundaries, so even states with stringent environmental regulation risk having the health of their citizens impacted by lax regulations in other states. EPA is responsible for setting minimal standards and must maintain that role or the health of future generations will be negatively impacted. Existing partnerships are working as well as they can, but without federal support (including but not limited to financial resources) these activities are doomed to fail.

My office frequently works with states and the private sector, with no need for improvements that I can think of. There is little intersection between my work and either tribes or local communities.

EPA is known for customer service to all of these parties already. However, if someone believed the regulated community should set the agenda, they might disagree. The Agency has a history of effective regulation and has crafted that regulation in a way that avoids the loss of jobs, as some have insinuated. Any changes to our existing relationships with stakeholders needs to be carefully evaluated and not rushed into. I worry that the answer that some would seek for this question is that we need to regulate less. If we ever reach the point where industry is not complaining about regulation we have already failed the American citizens and fallen short of meeting our mandate to protect human health and the environment.

I work very hard at doing excellent customer services to everyone who relies on me, including the public in other countries. We've all been on the other end of the phone.

This is a discussion that should be held across the Agency, I have been here for 30 years, but even with that amount of time I only know my own program. Any serious effort at making changes has to be organizational. There are most certainly things that can be done, and have been. It is important to note that staffing for EPA is at the lowest level it has been in about 20 years. I only mention that in case some would promote a reduction in staff as a means to "reduce costs and inefficiencies". There is not a person in the Agency who wouldn't welcome a thoughtful discussion of ways to improve efficiency and reduce costs. This has been done on numerous occasions, so any discussion has to begin with what's already been done.

No, not really.

The Office of Research and Development at EPA is one of the strongest in all of government. The Agency is recognized internationally as already being in the forefront of technology. There are processes that can be improved, such as the correspondence system, grant preparation, awarding of contracts, etc. Again, and I can't stress this enough, this should be the topic of discussion and not be decided through surveys. A lot of manpower and brain power has already been devoted to this area. The problems that do exist are generally the result of government-wide requirements and not anything that is EPA specific.

I'm not familiar with technologies that we don't yet have.

I can only speak for my office. We already have regular conversations with other agencies. We already devote time and effort to sharing information and working collaboratively. These efforts have resulted in significant savings of time and resources, and have led to stronger decisions. Of course these decisions are driven by science, so as long as that is the guiding principle there can be agreement across jurisdictions. The problems that are encountered are primarily the result of differing statutes, which is the purview of Congress and not EPA.

In my area, we already partner with other agencies and states.

In my work with international organizations I repeatedly hear that EPA already follows best practices in many areas. For example, our use of independent scientific panels for peer review is recognized as cutting edge. Without that impartiality, our decisions may be influenced by politics. As long as we let science drive the decisions we will continue to be respected and our policies and regulations will continue to be held up in courts, where we have a tremendous history of overcoming suits intended to undermine our protection of human health and the environment.

No.

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The requirements for maintaining certification as a Contract Officer Representative (COR) are burdensome and not necessary for most of us who manage work assignments for contractors to perform technical reviews. The COR requirements are government-wide, not just for my agency. Most of us spend less than 15 percent of our workhours managing contracts, yet we are required to renew our certification every two years by taking 40 credit hours. There currently are 3 Tiers of COR certification. There should be one more tier between the first and second tiers, for those of us who manage non-construction work assignments.

Time and attendance is very inefficient. It leave requests do not link up with the time card in People Plus. It creates errors and costs time making correction.

Our grants and contracting systems/processes are overly concerned with competitive fairness that they have lost their effectiveness. We the process discourages applicants from competing.

Managers can keep track of all of the time systems - Telework (regular and episodic), flextime, compressed schedule, comp time and travel comp time (why 2 types of comp time),

We have significant obstacles with working with the private sector. We should be encouraged to work with corporations. There are two good examples where we are allowed to work with corporations. One is the 5-Star grant program where we partner with the Southern Company and FedEx to administer a good grant program. The other is the Corporate Wetlands Partnership where companies like CH2MHill help local communities implement environmental projects.

We should send EPA staff on assignments to work in state and tribal offices. States and tribes have so much staff turnover due to their low salary structures that EPA can increase its role of technical and policy support. A primary role EPA plays is to help states and tribes rebuild technical and policy skills after staff losses.

All oversight for the US Virgin Islands should be moved from the Region 2 office (NY) to the Region 4 office (Florida). It takes a full day to travel to the USVI, and a full day to travel back to NYC, because there are no longer non-stop flights to the USVI. Consequently, traveling from the R2 office to the USVI is a waste of time and money. It makes no sense for someone at R2 to travel to Miami to catch a flight to the USVI, if the Regional Office can just be moved to Florida. It is true that there is an EPA field office in Puerto Rico, which does inspections in the USVI, but upper management at Region 2 is in New York City.

We need more travel money. We have strong expertise but our staff and we need to get that expertise out in the states and communities to help them in their mission.

If we improved our very in-efficient administrative systems we could do our jobs some much more effectively. Time keeping, contracting, grants management. We could do "more with less" if our systems didn't take so much time.

Giving managers more time to deal with problem employees. 95% of EPA employees do a great job but we cannot get discipline or get rid of the 5% of poor performers and disruptive staff.

We need to make better use of the technologies we have. We need better in-house one-on-one technical support to implement systems like SharePoint and OneDrive. On demand technical support for our mobile devices is needed. We do not make the best use of them.

More interagency agreements. We can partner with the US forest service to improve urban and rural forestry. We can partner more with USDA on agricultural chemical reductions. This is a larger opportunity.

I'm a manager in the wetlands program R4. I use my incremental funding to train my staff along side of the US Army Corps of Engineers. Training together means we share the same knowledge and develop better working relationships. We are seeing significant improvements in our ability to process 404 permits and to help establish better wetland and stream mitigation banks. Conducting more joint training with our fed and state partners is quite valuable. We need more travel and training dollars to do this better.

We need better ways with fewer administrative requirements for groups (other than states and tribes) to receive and manage EPA grants. We have had many tell us that they no longer will apply for EPA grants because the requirements are too onerous. We need to find best practices from other agencies and figure out how to streamline the number of requirements we place on grant recipients. On the other side, we have given so much flexibility to state and tribes that it's hard to keep them accountable for the money received. Every project officer's income is on the line when we sign off on a grantee's paperwork. We need to find some halfway point where grant recipients can handle the paperwork, and EPA project officers are confident that the grant money is being spent well. The world is no longer run by handshake agreements.

We need clear guidelines on how to work all of these groups as partners in ways that do not break any ethics rules. Now, we can nearly count on being told it's an ethical problem if we ask for guidance on what we can or cannot say. It is very hard to talk to groups about potential activities they can do when the only thing EPA can offer are competitive grants. We also cannot bridge the ethical gap to talk to the private sector about ways they can participate to help communities. We need clear guidelines so we know what we can do, say and when.

The Urban Waters program is a national leader in working across agencies and organizations with communities to make real-world improvements in their economic, social and environment.

<https://fcw.com/blogs/lectern/2016/07/interagency-collaboration.aspx> The emphasis is on agencies working together to combine our statutory authorities to do activities that none of us can do alone. By working closely and collaborating with communities it builds political support. And no less important, the Urban Waters program has established a dedicated infrastructure that supports, provides a knowledgeable network, and manages partnership efforts. Through this program, it has become apparent that having a dedicated "ambassador", a person who has dedicated time to learn about everything happening and of interest in that community, has built relationships and trust, and has the knowledge of a variety of government programs and knows how to interrelate those to accelerate projects is invaluable and irreplaceable. Who that person is or who they are with isn't as important as having dedicated time, interest, are neutral and trusted. And when we do make an investment in a community with staff time to help them establish a local working group, we need to allow them the time it takes to get there based on their situation -- not our administrative or political permissible timeline. This person exponentially accelerates customer service and efficiency across multiple agencies, organizations and people. In areas with complicated situations, they are invaluable.

We need to work better across programs to build on each program's strengths. Reduced staff has decreased our ability to take our own personal initiative to make those connections. Somehow, making these connections across geographic locations while maintaining cross-program consistency is needed.

We need better GIS skills and tracking systems to see activities across federal agency and across programs. For example, knowledge of the geographic scope of grants paying for tree planting in an area 303d listed for urban pollutants where TMDLs are being written. We need better ways to see cross program/agency activity. It needs to be segregated by issue area so we're not wading through inconsequential minutiae.

Again, I reference the UWFP program where a dedicated person building partnerships across agencies makes everyone more successful and efficient. The Community of Practice is the initiation of this kind of effort to build staff networks and knowledge across the federal agencies, connecting staff who have been doing the work with those beginning to share their knowledge. This example is working to make these activities more aligned and to share the information across all federal community engagement practitioners so we can be more effective. We have many shared interests in professional development, definitions of job elements, measures of effectiveness and a need for a shared knowledge base. Every public group wants to know what federal programs are available to assist and help them -- a national list of federal agency programs with eligibility, focus, geographic limitations and requirements for funding and available technical assistance is needed. Not just what is open now as on grants.gov, but what is available throughout the year so that organizations and the public can prioritize and plan their actions forward. We need this to continue and expand so that we can make these connections across our agencies to be the most effective in responding to the public.

Again, the UWFP model helps with all of this when working in areas or communities with intractable, complex issues that have been unable to be addressed by programs working in our usual processes. With sufficient funding, resources provided and time allowed to build, it can tackle the hardest of challenges. While it can not make some processes work faster or more transparent due to litigation requirements or other activities whose timelines are not controlled by any agency, it does have a built-in process to be responsive to community needs, increase our efficiency and accountability and thus reduce costs and effort. It has the structure for this to work in a variety of complex situations whether urban or rural, willing or reticent providing a network of support..

- 1) Uncertainty in the future of EPA programs is not effective. Please provide more certainty.
- 2) Reporting on every public meeting we attend where press may be present is not effective. We will do this as it is currently required, but it is an ineffective, inefficient administrative requirement that has been newly instituted by the current administration.
- 3) Fear of losing programs that already consider the economy and work closely with communities to identify their needs. Please support these already excellent programs more rather than less. And then we will be efficient and effective again.

Base decisions on science and community input. The way to do this even better is to provide more funds and staff for gathering community input on existing or potential EPA programs that the community supports and targeting science to meet those community interests and legal requirements. Support EJ 2020.

Listen to them and act with respect. Especially listen to the poor, the elderly, the children, the chronically ill, and the traditionally underserved communities.

Also, do not use double-speak in internal or external communications. Our partners see right through it and so do we, the EPA work force. It is embarrassing to try to serve our community when they see the double-speak that is put out in communications. Luckily, they know that it does not come from their trusted EPA long-time dedicated partners.

Yes. Restore the staff's faith in executive management. This would reduce inefficiencies of us worrying about what lies ahead and if we will still be able to protect human health and the environment.

EPA employees will continue to do our good work to protect human health and the environment and we will continue to do so in a fiscally-responsible manner for our contracts and grants; for our community work, for our public-private partnerships, and for our responsible permitting and enforcement. We are professionals and we are American citizens and we care deeply about this country.

Bring current EPA technologies up to private sector standards as this makes good business sense.

We are already doing much to align activities in areas of shared responsibility to support synergy and minimize redundancy with other federal agencies and states and tribes. The best thing you could do would be to support the most effective partnerships through public and internal recognition. Ask the states and tribes which of our programs they like best and where we can improve. Ask the EJ communities where we could do better, and where we have done well.

Ask yourself what you can do to realign your own communication and actions with the EPA workforce so that the EPA can accomplish more.

I am fearful of pointing these out to you in this forum as I do not want you to target them for cuts. What can YOU do to build trust with the EPA workforce so that we are better able to work with you in good faith? What can YOU do to show your respect for this world class organization of dedicated professionals who already care about the American economy, the American environment, and the American people; and show up at work every day to make the world a better place?

795 5/9/2017

796 5/10/2017

1. We should allow 24-hour noncompliance reporting under NPDES permits by e-mail. 40 CFR 122.41(l)(6)(i) states that "The permittee shall report any noncompliance which may endanger health or the environment. Any information shall be provided orally within 24 hours from the time the permittee becomes aware of the circumstances." This requirement for reporting "orally" means this reporting must be done by telephone instead of e-mail, when, as a practical matter, e-mail would be preferable for a number of reasons. I realize that e-mail does not comply with the Cross-Media Electronic Reporting Rule (CROMERR), but neither does voice mail (which is how these "oral" reports are currently received and stored).

2. We should eliminate the prohibition on using subsidized, unlimited transit passes for local work-related travel. In Region 10, we have been told that we may not use our subsidized transit passes for local travel (e.g., using transit to get from the office to the airport), even if the employee has used their subsidy to buy a monthly transit pass that provides unlimited rides, meaning that such additional use of the pass would incur no cost to the Agency. Instead, we are to have such transit use reimbursed on travel authorizations, which directly costs the Agency money and which is an unnecessary administrative burden. The IRS allows the use of subsidized unlimited transit passes for local travel (see link below), and we should do the same.

https://www.irs.gov/irm/part1/irm_01-032-015.html#d0e1490

3. Local computer help desks should be authorized to install any publicly available software that is developed by any federal agency without approval by a supervisor or the local information resources manager.

The new administration is requiring a level of review and scrutiny of external engagement and website management that is overreaching and detrimental to the the Agency's ability to share basic information with the public in a timely fashion. The administration would be well served - it it would be in the public's best interest - to consider a more targeted approach to what requires senior-level review prior to release.

We should strengthen and expand our pollution prevention and resource conservation programs (e.g., Safer Choice, Energy Star, and Water Sense), which are private-sector partnerships. It's generally cheaper and more effective to stem pollution at the source than to treat it or clean it up after it's been released.

Collaboration and achievement requires engagement and mutual respect. The Agency should be mindfully deferential to its external partners, but we also need to strike a reasonable balance and step in where mediation is required.

1. We should finalize the 2016 Methods Update Rule which was signed by the previous Administrator, but which was not published in the Federal Register.

<https://www.epa.gov/cwa-methods/methods-update-rule-2016>

2. To the extent that approved Clean Water Act analytical methods cannot quantify chemicals at or below the EPA's recommended water quality criteria for those chemicals, we should develop and approve more sensitive analytical methods for use under the Clean Water Act.

3. We should complete the effort to modernize our website, including Regional pages.

To the extent that external antipathy toward the Agency exists (a significant majority of the American public supports our mission and our work), it is due to a lack of positive in-person engagement to understand issues and constraints on both sides of the important issues we are trying to address. Engagement requires resources - it can't be done effectively with our online communications or conference calls.

We should standardize around a single tool for web conferencing (i.e., screen and webcam sharing and audio conferencing). Currently, we purchase both Adobe Connect and Skype for Business, which have duplicative capabilities. I would think it would make sense to standardize around Skype since it is integrated with other Microsoft applications and with Windows.

Gmail instead of Outlook, Google Chrome instead of Explorer, Google Drive instead of OneDrive. Free vs Fee. You get the idea.

1. We should replace our current paper permit application forms with electronic application forms.
2. We should eliminate paper records in favor of electronic databases wherever possible, including but not limited to files related to National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits.
3. We should allow outside parties to communicate with us through Skype (as long as such communication is work-related, of course). The last time I checked (which was in 2015), I was told that we could not add people outside of EPA to our Skype contacts, even though Skype for Business has this capability.
<https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Allow-users-to-contact-external-Skype-for-Business-users-b414873a-0059-4cd5-aea1-e5d0857dbc94>

Incorporate more modern and effective collaboration technologies such as Slack.

1. We should work with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to streamline the Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation process. Consultation with the USFWS and NOAA for EPA actions that may affect threatened and endangered species is frequently a lengthy and difficult process. We should also ensure that ESA consultation is not just a paperwork exercise but actually results in better protection for threatened and endangered species and the environment in general.

2. We should cooperate with the USDA Rural Development Rural Utilities Service to improve water and wastewater infrastructure in rural areas.

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs/water-environmental-programs>

We should make use of SharePoint, including its workflow capabilities, to reduce e-mail and paper traffic.

<https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Overview-of-workflows-included-with-SharePoint-d74fcceb-3a64-40fb-9904-cc33ca49da56>

See above regarding technology.

Also, procurement protocols need a radical overhaul to improve or remedy timeliness, resource-intensivity, and bureaucratic obstacles to using lowest-cost options.

797 5/10/2017

798 5/10/2017

Finding paper copies

Hiring a ton of GOOD software developers that can develop user-friendly databases, interfaces, softwares and other tools so we can all better organize things and find things. There are plenty of technological capabilities that are available that we just don't currently have resources for. If we all had one place that was easy to use in which we could all communicate more effectively, it would make being consistent and transparent much easier and much more efficient. Right now, these are what make up our triple constraint. We can't do all three with so little resources.

Workable, user-friendly, job-specific software and programs.

Review Region 2's CONNECTr2 system - see video: **[REDACTED B6 Internal Webpage]**

If you like the above system at all - I have a video that describes a "Subject Matter Contact" system that should be added on to increase agency interaction and accountability. If you want to see it - send an email to the designer **[REDACTED B6 Internal Webpage]**

From experience in the industry and working with state agencies, there are a lot of redundancies at the state level that the federal level encompasses. Most companies end up doing things multiple times to relay the same information just in different formats depending on which state they operate in. Having an overall federal standard that encompasses all of these requirements would help to cut down on unnecessary paperwork and relieve a lot of pressure on individual states in redoing the work that is already being done on the federal level, allowing for states to do the much needed "boots-on-the-ground" work.

Training. Proper training would require an initial investment of time and money, but would cut, exponentially, those costs in the long-term. For example, if you spend 6 months properly training a new employee, that employee could be 5 times more productive in doing his/her job for the rest of his/her federal career. Right now, our "orientation" is one day, half of which is spent waiting on a badge. I have experienced much more rigorous trainings in the private sector but felt fully prepared and more efficient in performing my tasks after being trained properly. Training that I experienced in the private sector consisted of 1 week of administrative training (how to set up your computer, becoming security cleared, retirements, healthcare options, etc.) 1 week of safety training, 8 months of structured on-the-job training in which I was paired with a mentor and given a "curriculum" then sent to a "school" in which I was specifically tested on job-specific knowledge.

Here, I still don't know where to look for most of what I need and will waste half of my day searching for a specific document or back calculating an equation that nobody has the time to explain.

799 5/10/2017

800 5/10/2017

set up a standard understandable tiered organizational structure. get rid of silly notion of having offices within offices, etc

reevaluate notion that all regions 'roll-their-own' organizational structure that sometimes is not aligned with HQ

Water programs and enforcement should be in one contained organization - bifurcation makes no sense & drift results in eventual non-alignment.

The administrative requirements, management procedures, and other organizational processes are in place for a reason and do not prevent me from doing my job efficiently and effectively. Due to the important and highly visible nature of our work, it is important to ensure that all work produced within my office and this agency is accurate and appropriate. Thus, there is nothing to address.

I believe the EPA already does a great deal to work with states, tribes and local communities to ensure that when EPA action is required in a town, the local community is involved and aware of what is going on. Superfund is a good example of EPA working hand and hand with these stakeholders to ensure that positive and effective relationships are forged. I would say that it is a great idea to partner with any and all parties whose primary goal is the health of their local population and the environment.

Improving the technological capacity and understanding of the EPA staff could prove very useful for improving customer service. There are a number of communication tools available which due to a lack of training, many staff do not understand how to use. Having Skype meetings to improve professional relationships, using OneDrive to collaborate on work simultaneously with states or local communities, and using SharePoint to provide a single location for all information related to a community would do wonders for providing better customer service to our stakeholders.

As stated in question 3, investing and improving the technological capacity of the EPA would greatly improve the efficiency of the EPA without large changes in staff or policy.

- 1) SharePoint - Adopted (isn't universal)
- 2) OneDrive - Adopted (isn't universal)
- 3) Skype - Adopted (isn't universal)

These are technologies which the agency already has access to which are under utilized. Before spending more money on new technologies, it would be smarter to truly invest in what we have now and find ways to improve our use of them.

This is a question for a subject matter expert in this area, which I am not.

There are plenty of examples of companies using OneDrive and SharePoint more effectively than the EPA. It is always important, however, to keep in mind the unique role the government plays and its accountability structures. It is easy to say "let's do it like they do" but much more difficult to implement.

801 5/10/2017

802 5/10/2017

When filling out your timecard and you have taken leave in the morning, you put in a leave slip for that time. Then unexpectedly you have to take time off in the afternoon that same day. The system will not take a new leave slip since there already is one for that date. So then you have to contact your supervisor to cancel or disapprove that leave slip so you are able to put in one slip that combines the two different times. You then put a comment in telling them what times you have taken. The system needs to be able to handle more than one leave slip on one day. This will save time and money in putting your time in the system. You won't have to bother your supervisor to cancel your leave so you can do another leave slip for both times. I have ran into this situation a few times and had to get my supervisor to cancel the first so I could do another.

There is so much paper being wasted during the concurrence process. The concurrence package is created, it is reviewed and edited by first line supervisor. If there are edits, new paper copies are reprinted. Then if upper management has edits, the concurrence package is prepared again. This can go through 5 or 6 iterations before the final package is mailed off. I would suggest electronic concurrence on letters using track changes. After receiving all edits, then the paper concurrence package can be sent out.

803 5/10/2017

804 5/10/2017

Lack of funds at the Branch level. Branch Chiefs should be enabled to send their staff to training and for necessary travel without higher approval.

The procurement process is very inefficient and is a major hurdle to doing my job. Currently, we need to get 3 price quotes for items, even as small as a pen, before we can even place an order. We also need multiple sign offs when receiving orders, such as the person who ordering the product cannot sign off that they received it, another person must do this. We also need to get 3 price quotes for items that have a sole source, making the purchase of these items near impossible. Overall, the process takes a considerable amount of time, that prevents everyone here from doing their job.

Increase travel budget

Learn what methods they are using to generate scientific data for their work. Often enough, there are new advances in science that EPA does not implement or takes several years to implement. These scientific methods are very quickly adopted by private and state corporations.

Increase travel budget.

Watching a bee do its thing this morning I was reminded of how heaps of research suggests that the concept of cross pollination of ideas is one of the keys to more creativity and innovation at work. The more people from different areas of expertise mix and mingle and share ideas and perspectives, the greater the likelihood of truly novel ideas rising to the surface. Here are a few ways you can encourage cross-pollination in your workplace:

- ???Hold job shadowing days where employees shadow someone in a completely different department.
- ???Hold job swap days - where feasible have employees take over each other's duties for a day.
- ???Invite outsiders to your meetings - from other departments, areas of expertise, or even outside EPA.
- ???Cross train: include people from across a variety of disciplines and departments in training programs.
- ???Hold social events and business networking events that cross department boundaries.
- ???Hold contests for creative ideas that include family members, customers, and all your employees.

One of the biggest inefficiencies is the number of meetings and webinars we have. I have been in more meetings at EPA in the first 4 months I have been here than in 5+ years working for DOE and DHS, and I am not in a more senior position to constitute this increase in meetings. Most people that I work with cannot get their work done in an efficient manner because they are overwhelmed with the number of meetings they have to attend.

More use of skype share screen.

It takes several years for EPA to implement improved scientific methods, that the private sector implements very rapidly. EPA scientific methods are at least 5 to 10 years behind science that exists in either the private sector or at a university. Ways to speed up the process of updating the current EPA scientific methods to better meet what is available in the private sector is necessary.

Have us work closer with NASA on environmental issues.

- and don't forget Tribes.

Enable employees to do their jobs by giving them the resources they need, instead of continuing to remove them.

As I stated in some of my previous replies, making the procurement process easier is a start. Also, implementing more Lean Six Sigma processes and having management more open to them is another start.

805 5/10/2017

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807 5/10/2017

The agency's lack of access to common software tools (ie. Autocad, Photoshop[, Indesign) used by the private industry adds a hurdle in the efficiency and accuracy of our work. As EPA Staff having access to these would facilitate the workflow, lessen time-frames and allow for a more direct and efficient communication with our partners and stakeholders.

Mandatory training for multiple reasons. Consolidate mandatory training requirements for managing contracts, conducting laboratory and field work, ORD requirements and agency requirements. We have too many administrative staff that all they do is police us to fill out this that or the other. What they should do instead of being policeman, actually fill out the administrative requirements for us if we supply the information.

In order to achieve better environmental results, the agency must make it a priority to always work with a "user centered design" approach in mind. Where states, tribes, local communities, and the private sector take on an active and participatory role in the development of rules, regulations and volunteer programs.

We have excellent examples of these in our National Surveys and our Great Lakes Areas of Concern efforts. We collaborate to collect data and share that data across federal agencies, states and communities. The problem with the private sector is they want money. What should be done to engage the private sector is tax incentives if they collaborate with the federal government. Not pay them.

Make science the foundation of our decisions, not some secret political calculus. Since our Administrator and Chief of Staff are unqualified and completely conflicted, they cannot serve in their respective positions. EPA therefore no longer has any credibility.

Better customer service comes down to serving the needs of the public. The use of technology - social media platforms, apps, forums - are all great tools. However, there is still a need for "on the ground" access where individuals can connect with each other face to face.

Need more travel dollars in order to meet with the states and regulatory community as well as attending town hall meetings. Our problem is we have too limited travel funds to outreach, understand our client needs better so we can be a more effective partner. when I worked in the Regional Offices I made it a priority to visit each state in my Region once per year at least. They respected me for doing this.

Get new and legitimate leadership

Increasing telework opportunities throughout the agency would reflect a savings to EPA's operational costs.

Pretty hard to say given the reduced budget EPA has been working with for the past 10 yrs. If you adjust the budget for inflation you will see EPA has not really been increasing. I think that there are too many people in Washington. 30% of the FTEs in Washington should be moved to the Regions and ORD labs. Look at the manager/administrative staff to scientist ratios. Reduce the management layers and administrative staff for more boots on the ground.

Many of our regulations are 10-20 years old. There should be a 5 year review process for all regulations not to get rid of them but to update them with the latest information that is available. For example, the guidelines for setting ambient water quality criteria for the protection of aquatic life we finalize in 1986. The science has really advanced since that time and newer approaches are available. Have a 5 year review process for all EPA guidelines with an update option

Ambient monitoring is spread across, NOAA, USGS, Army Corpse, EPA, USFWS for water. Develop cooperatives across these agencies to address multiple agency responsibilities. Why is the geological survey monitoring water quality, conducting toxicity tests and sampling wildlife? Focus them more on geochemistry. See how much of their budget comes from other agencies. USGS works more like a contracting firm than a federal agency when it comes to biological issues.

Sorry this is a little out of my field. But I would consider reorganization of ORD more along the lines of media than the Risk Assessment process. The risk assessment process is outdated. We need a more media approach to research or problem oriented approach.

808 5/10/2017

809 5/10/2017

eDiscovery tools are extremely limited, do not de-dupe, or sort.

The biggest issue is that EPA Offices/Regions/Labs do not work together to ensure that their processes and procedures comport with one another. So, many procedures and processes are duplicated or triplicated to accommodate various overlapping jurisdictions (even when there is one clear or key decider). Much work is needed in centralizing and harmonizing all administrative, management and organizational procedures and processes.

At the same time that procedures/processes need to be harmonized and centralized, more delegation of action items needs to take place. The lack of appropriate delegation of work leads to confusing and convoluted procedures and processes for even the most simple tasks (e.g., sending a response to a citizen inquiry).

Proposed rules could have a listening session for each sector, including NGOs. Your question does not include NGOs.

All of the aforementioned partners in this question should have a more active role in developing KPIs for the agency as part of the strategic planning process. All too frequently, EPA is writing its own KPIs and performance measures that it knows that it will meet. However, were these stakeholders allowed notice and comment periods that more specifically addressed metrics, EPA would need to reach further in achieving results and be held more accountable by the public more broadly.

EPA could host regular meetings with these entities. However, you could change the EPA representatives to include both managers and staff.

Management needs to be better held accountable for customer service to external stakeholders. Few if any managers have KPIs that explicitly evaluate much needed skills in providing customer service. It is only through holding them accountable through a KPI on such a matter (tied to bonuses, performance reviews and more) that customer service will be a priority in the Agency at manager and staff levels.

EPA invests significant resources in promulgating and defending rules and agency actions. Prior to withdrawing or engaging in any agency action, a comprehensive legal risk analysis should occur because defending actions (and potentially losing these cases) are expensive.

Yes. Certain support functions could be consolidated to produce significant savings. Human resources, information technology, grants, and contracts could all be further consolidated into fewer and larger service centers which would not only make such functions more economical and efficient, but also more equitable to citizens and accountable to elected officials in the Executive and Legislative Branches.

Also, EPA facilities staff could be significantly consolidated and reduced in size. For instance, within multiple Regions, there is a facilities section that exceeds the size of most program sections in which activities are stovepiped (e.g., one staff person addresses one type of key, another person does a different key). Such activities could be further consolidated and in many cases---for non-IGF functions---contracted out.

Better eDiscovery tools for processing litholds and FOIA requests.

Software and hardware need to be significantly upgraded in the Agency. Of highest importance are digital workflows and big data tools.

In all cases, with respect to the procurement of technology and use of it, EPA also needs to better hire top IT talent. Frequently, IT and Procurement staff do not have expertise in the technologies that they are procuring or managing, leading to increased costs and great inefficiency.

EPA needs to first determine what the mutual interests are, and then both entities need to develop a mutual action plan.

Energy Star. This is an incredible program.

We should be using LEAN and Six Sigma (both together for some activities and apart for others) in improving all aspects of the Agency. Management should be held accountable in undertaking such efficiency and improvement seeking. All too frequently, managers avoid these processes because the additional waste identified personally them (e.g., a "bigger 'kingdom'," a bigger budget, etc.)

Also, we should be setting an example in the environment by certifying ourselves to the Standards we promote industry using, such as ISO 14001, various lab accreditation standards, and more. EPA should be audited by third-parties as part of that work, to show the same commitment that others show, while also getting needed audits and input from the outside (which could bring new and fresh perspectives).

810 5/10/2017

811 5/10/2017

I was working with a vendor, and the person handling the purchase was about to go on leave. When she went to submit an invoice electronically, she got a message saying that they needed to first submit for authorization to do that. So I had to step in and triage the situation, taking time from other needed work. Why in the world is an authorization needed for electronic invoices, when it's more efficient, saves everyone time?!

Remove the requirement of authorization for electronic invoices.

Efficiency could improve if many senior managers and senior scientists would use the technology we have. I say "senior" only because it seems to be the older folks who won't even sign on to Skype. When Skype is active I can tell at a glance when someone is in their office and available, in a meeting, or not in. But the user must be set up for automatic log-in. I do a lot of unnecessary walking if folks would simply sign in to Skype. Also managers would get much better evaluations if their subordinates knew who they are. If a manager can't get around and be seen, at least he/she can post a picture on Outlook to let staff know who they are.

We have repetitive systems to document and account for work, scheduling, case development and conclusion that I would be nobody really looks at but a few folk and just adds to the paperwork in the office. I often get the idea that someone that has nothing better to do just continuously dreams up things for people to do and forms for people to fill out instead of letting people do their work. But that is what happens when you have too many people and unnecessary levels of management.

We used to have a self disclosure policy in place and that has pretty much gone by the wayside I think that was helpful. With states it is a mixed bag as to the cooperation that one will get on case development. Often times they will just refer the case to us and let us handle the work.

More education on the pitfalls tha industry can get into and more regulatory assistance across the board.

Although no one in my area will ever admit this I believe that we have too many people in our area. I am an attorney in Region 5 and people fight for new cases. I think it is because we just have too many people and not enough cases to go around. My current case load at the moment is ridiculous. We also have several unnecessary levels of management with too many Assistants and Deputies and perhaps not enough emphasis on Senior Attorneys that can assist the younger attorneys. There is no reason why some of these Deputies spend every afternoon walking around visiting with their friends except that they have nothing better to do. In fact if you ask the line attorney about what all these Deputies and Assistants do they will tell you they do not know, maybe go to meetings!

Up to date software would be nice as well as hardware.

No answer.

Don't hire people if you do not need them. Prior to the change in Administration we got a large influx of new attorneys and our general case load per attorney suffered. It was totally unnecessary.

813 5/10/2017

814 5/10/2017

1. EPA has a long-standing, chronic problem of not clearly identifying decision makers, which results in a variety of negative outcomes, including painfully slow decision making and wasting significant personnel time in the process. Outside EPA, the agency is frequently criticized, and oftentimes fairly criticized, for our inability to make timely decisions. To improve, clearly identify decision makers, and hold them accountable for making timely decisions.
2. EPA culture relies upon too many meetings, with too many people in those meetings. As a result, we waste significant time. To improve, create a culture in which meetings are limited and focused, and in which people are expected to show up to meetings prepared, instead of doing their thinking out loud during a meeting. We could be far more efficient if we truly valued our time, and viewed it as a valuable and limited resource that we should carefully allocate, instead of wantonly overscheduling ourselves in meetings.

For starters, EPA should engage more frequently with those partners. Like many federal and other government agencies, EPA is far too insular. There is a world of environmental professionals outside of EPA, but many EPA employees are not in touch with that world.

1. Outside EPA (and other federal agencies), EPA (and other federal agencies) are often criticized for the "cast of thousands" that work on every project. For example, our state partners will deploy a lean and focused team to address a problem, while EPA will assign seemingly dozens of people to the same problem. While coordination within the agency is valuable, we too often assign redundant levels of staff to the same projects. If we gave work to smaller teams, we could accomplish more with less resources.
2. Media stories report that the EPA political team is looking into closing regional offices. That's not an effective way to reduce costs and inefficiencies. However, there are many small, satellite EPA offices that might be worth looking at, perhaps to phase out over time.

Provide incentives to individual offices to save money (e.g., travel dollars). Currently, the incentive is to spend allocated dollars for fear of having the next year's allocation reduced. Removing that fear and creating alternative incentives will save money.

EPA wastes significant attorney time on document review due to sub-standard software. If we invested in the full, updated versions of the Relativity software, as DOJ does (but EPA does not), we would spend some initial capital, but regain hundreds if not thousands of hours of attorney time that is current lost in document review. The private sector and DOJ do a better job with investing in the right software, and as a result, they save substantial attorney time.

In Region 8, we've formed a Content Management Unit (CMU) to centralize FOIA work in the region. It's more efficient and produces better quality FOIA work than distributing that workload to program offices without FOIA expertise. Similarly, the FOIA Expert Assistance Team (FEAT) in OGC centralizes FOIA expertise on large and contentious FOIA projects. Therefore, I'd recommend replicating the successes of the Region 8 CMU and OGC FEAT throughout the agency - centralize FOIA work. With a relatively small investment of FTE, we save significant time throughout the agency, and we produce better and faster results in our EPA FOIA workload.

I work in a regional office. EPA HQ has a lot of expertise, however consulting with HQ is inefficient and can slow a project. I have found that often too many people have a say in a decision, some that are not currently in a role with any authority in a matter. Some of this is because there are too many layers of management in HQ. Also, if something is not working well there is no way to improve it. HQ should send out customer surveys. First it needs to consider the Region as customers. Note that I have also seen regions ignore HQ, including ignore orders. I do not understand this, but it shows that HQ and Regions can learn to work better together. I work in Superfund.

1. At larger Superfund sites, gathering folks together to see who is best positioned to address each part of the site. 1. Allow each party to have bit of independence vs everyone looking over everyone else's shoulders. This could speed up decisions. What never is discussed publicly among the regulators is the cost to the environment from delays in addressing contamination. Fighting to get the "perfect" decision can be detrimental to the environment if it causes years of delays.
2. I have seen situations where EPA has not been as respectful of tribes as we are trained to do.

I would conduct training to help EPA staff understand what it is like to sit on the other side of the table and be regulated or have to live with EPA decisions. This could lead to better cooperation, better explanation of decisions even if someone does not agree. I used to be regulated. As a result, I try hard to explain my decisions so the regulated community does not hear "because I told you to". This also leads to better decisions because it leads to more nuanced and defensible decisions. As a Superfund project manager, I often state that I am both regulator and am regulated. I have found that permit writers cannot adequately explain how to implement a regulation. Since I do not need to obtain permits, but only have to follow technical requirements, a permit writer does not have authority over me and I do not have to accept "because I told you to". I cannot always get my questions answered to the depth I need to make decisions at my sites. The public does not have that same ability to question a permit as they need the permits to conduct the business. I believe this can lead to, for example, guidance being treated as regulations.

It is a shame that some of the volunteer programs are being defunded (such as energy star). These produce environmental results without a regulation. It gives the regulated community to make their own decisions and be recognized by EPA for doing such. This can lead to better results in ways that laws and regulations can't (among other things, there is a lot less litigation over volunteer programs).

Over time from administrations of both parties, more and more review is needed to, for example, send a fact sheet to Superfund community. This leads to less communication because of the time and effort it takes. A knowledgeable community can hold us accountable, but also help us make a good decision the first time.

Laboratory analytical methods using the same basic scientific principles should be harmonized across programs. Significant differences arose in methods authored by different committees at different times with little impact on data quality. This requires private, industry, and government labs to maintain duplicate instrumentation and staff to accomplish the same task.

One specific example: The analysis of water for volatile organic compounds is controlled by multiple methods ??? 524 (drinking water) 624 (surface and wastewater) 8260 (liquid wastes) and the CLP Statement of Work (drinking and groundwater at superfund sites). They all use purge and trap sampling to remove the volatiles from a liquid followed by gas chromatography separation and mass spectrometry analysis. With little effort the procedures could share instrumental settings and criteria. As it is, the steps are written just different enough to preclude a consistent, seamless laboratory procedure.

The Senior Environmental Employment (SEE) Program provides an opportunity for retired and unemployed Americans age 55 and over to share their expertise with U.S. EPA, remaining active using their matured skills in meaningful tasks that support a wide variety of environmental programs. In 1984, the Environmental Programs Assistance Act (P.L. 98-313; codified as 42 CFR 4368a) authorized EPA to establish a program of grants/cooperative agreements to federal, state, and local environmental agencies for projects of pollution prevention, abatement, and control

The intention of this program was to rotate SEE enrollees every couple of years. We have SEE enrollees who have been with EPA 20+ years, thus eliminating the opportunity for newly retired and unemployed Americans age 55 and over to be considered for employment. EPA awards over \$43m annually to NAPCA, the grantee. The administrative costs associated each quarter for each enrollee seems excessive. Recommendation: To conduct a financial audit/review of NAPCA as EPA's grantee . With the current Administration's focus to both programmatic and payroll costs, this program should be significantly reduced.

Recommend realigning/centralizing FOIA and grants activities @ the Regional level vs. having these employees assigned throughout the Divisions/Offices in the Region.

While I like telework, I think that it may not be as efficient as it once was in the beginning. I would suggest a "redo" or "pause" on flexiplace/telework in order to reassess it's effectiveness. Perhaps having everyone report to their appropriate office for a 3-4 month time period? This might help assess whether workload efficiency has decreased/increased w/telework and it might encourage those who are not as interested in doing an A+ effort to leave/retire. Sometimes I think that people who have been here "too long" don't want to embrace creativity or innovation or even just do things in a timely fashion (not everyone, but it's enough to be frustrating sometimes).

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Over the past several years EPA has increased its efforts for centralized control of information and messaging. This effort has hampered emergency responders trying to work closely with response partners and affected communities. Delays in the distribution of information are seen as problematic. In the past, EPA invested in training its emergency responders in ways to better handle media, relate to communities, and communicate effectively. Now EPA seems to want to make sure that all important communications rest in the domain of public affairs.

Management review and approval procedures are preventing Lean and Lean six sigma improvement ideas coming forward.

Actually listen to the States and engage them - especially when things that we do require us to consider State law. For example, EPA and USCG consider owners of land to be responsible for old oil wells. However, State laws (and State agencies administering them) seem to disagree. This importance difference of opinion has strained relationships between oil and gas divisions in the States and EPA responders trying to implement oil cleanups. I do not sense much interactions between States and EPA (or the Coast Guard which administers the OSLTF) in the arena of finding responsible parties for oil pollution incidents - especially when the federal governments opinion seems to greatly affect the State's citizens.

Improve regulatory work products like permits and shared business processes using the lean concept call change by design, see the book Change by Design by Tim Brown.

See above - there needs to be interaction between the States and EPA specific to the issue of oil response and identification of responsible party in the context of oil.

Develop lean projects to improve customer services for the public.

EPA has invested too heavily in its efforts to prepare for response to WMD or similar. Many of the equipment items and personnel resources in which EPA is now spending larger dollars are duplicative of resources operated by National Guard units and other federal agencies. Too many times we find ourselves with all the equipment, but no real role in the exercises or incidents. The dollars EPA invests in elaborate labs and CBRN or WMD response should be more wisely spent on EPA's core mission.

Yes, across many programs from the Lean and lean six sigma lens. For example we currently have Superfund remedial project manager spending a whole career overseeing clean up on one site where only 2 years is needed.

Lean and Lean Six Sigma is widely accepted in industries and governmental organizations.

See above. An analysis of the mission of EPA in the context of response to WMD and CBRN events should be accomplished in light of the resources available at other Agencies.

Conduct joint Lean project with them to map out work processes and identify overlaps.

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Management review and approval procedures are preventing Lean and Lean six sigma improvement ideas coming forward.

Revise and standardize Position Descriptions (PD), our current system is very outdated, cumbersome and should be streamlined. We have many, many PDs that are duplicative, even within the same series.

Change performance system to pass/fail instead of five tier system. The five tier system is too subjective and not being implemented in a manner that is producing results or holding employees accountable or giving employees the recognition they deserve.

Streamline performance management, increase management ability to deal with performance issues. The current process puts a huge burden on supervisors and is extremely lengthy.

Improve the Performance Agreement and Recognition System. The PARs documents are not well designed, critical elements are not well written and therefore are not holding employees accountable. There should be more standardization around expectations and common elements.

Improve regulatory work products like permits and shared business processes using the lean concept call change by design, see the book Change by Design by Tim Brown.

We have good relationships with STLs and we continue to build those relationships. We will always have hard conversations, protecting public health and the environment is not easy, however, at the end of the day, we continue to work well with our STL partners.

Develop lean projects to improve customer services for the public.

Streamline processes whenever possible (grants, contracts, reporting), and continue to have conversations around expectations so that there are not surprises.

Yes, across many programs from the Lean and lean six sigma lens. For example we currently have Superfund remedial project manager spending a whole career overseeing clean up on one site where only 2 years is needed.

Records management needs to be streamlined. The process is extremely labor and cost intensive. Improve our electronic systems, databases, electronic submittals. We have a multitude of databases to capture data, they should be integrated, updated and/or streamlined. Some of the data we receive is in paper format, we must then hand enter it into a database, electronic submittal systems need to be invested in to reduce cost and labor.

Lean and Lean Six Sigma is widely accepted in industries and governmental organizations.

Conduct joint Lean project with them to map out work processes and identify overlaps.

Standardizing human resources systems, documents, across federal agencies would be a huge improvement. Why does each agency need to develop leave manuals, performance guidance documents etc? This practice is inefficient and leads to inequities between agencies and sometimes within a single agency.

Lean Six Sigma

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Renegotiate the with the unions to allow for: grade demotions and easier firing due to incompetence. Increase the availabilities of incentives for staff level federal employees. Many federal employees work with unmotivated and ineffective colleagues. It is de-motivating to see colleagues who do less than you get paid more than you simply because of time of service or the fact they were once during their career promoted to a higher position which they no longer serve in. It is tragic that if we undergo a RIF, the EPA loses its cheapest and most practically skilled labor component.

Require middle and upper non-political managers to move periodically. Managers that stay in a program for tens of years are coasting, are not challenged, have calcified views on EPA programs and priorities, and are less prone to innovate.

The 40 hour Contract Officer Representative training required to maintain certification that EPA utilizes is from DOD. As such is geared toward the types of contracts familiar to DOD and is at a contract officer level. The training provides very little in relevant instruction for CORs at EPA and takes up a weeks worth of pay for many individuals. I would address this issue by deleting the requirement to take this training to maintain COR certification and have the CORs be trained directly by their project officers.

Improve the computer program used by EPA to track controlled correspondence known as CMS, Correspondence Management System. It is inefficient and Regions have already identified the problems with the system.

Defund programs that are not involved directly in the implementation and oversight of regulations promulgated by the EPA. EPA spends a lot of \$ to help states and communities with efforts that are useful, but are not this agency's role. The willingness to help people and states with public health problems where states and local communities have failed or claim not to be able to handle the expense has resulted in scope creep at EPA that spreads budget too thin (staff \$ and other \$). This has impacted EPA's ability to oversee and where appropriate regulatory programs such as the Underground Injection Control Program and The National Primary Drinking Water Regulations. I suggest cutting non-regulatory programs and putting staff in regulatory and enforcement programs. Over time, staff attrition at HQ should be allowed to continue in order to build up staff in EPA Regional office in order to provide the field presence EPA needs to oversee industry and state programs.

a larger regional and field office presence and a smaller HQ staff. to the extent possible, automate reporting done by the regulated communities and make that data available in real time to the public on the EPA website. The public is the best regulator: they are directly connected to their environmental and public health concerns. They should have access to data to make decisions on how their communities go forward. EPA relies on public information we don't publish being "FOIA-able". I doubt many average citizens want to or know how to submit a FOIA so they can find the right information that will help inform their local concerns.

Regional EPA websites should be brought back and allow more flexibility in page design to meet the needs of the public. Make guidance documents and other informational materials available in e-reader format even if it means working with Barnes and Noble, Amazon, and others. This will make the information more readily available to users.

Make more information and data easily available to the public so they can take action through their state and federal reps. An informed public would help maintain environmental protection better.

We need to advance our reporting in many programs to make it easier for the regulated communities. In terms of new technology for in house work, no I don't see a need. I do see a need to keep employees trained in the latest technologies. I work with many people who do not know how to use microsoft excel. I think we should have mandatory tech training in place of some of our other mandatory trainings. I think aptitude with basic computing technologies should be required to maintain a job in the federal government. A recently retired colleague of mine [REDACTED B6] yet she did not understand how to use microsoft word or how to organize documents into folders on shared servers. When her services as a [REDACTED B6] were needed, she did her calculations on paper. She basically refused to use the tools (computer) the EPA gave her. This should not be allowable. We need to expect more from older members of our workforce while giving them a way to learn and maintain technology knowledge.

There is a huge amount of overlap in drinking water and waste water infrastructure grants and services in Indian Country. EPA, USDA, DHHS (IHS), BLM (BIA), and HUD all coordinate separate programs in Indian country (and rural US). EPA usually has the least amount of \$ to invest, but is the only agency with regulatory responsibility. In fact, the other agency staff often operates in a regulation blind environment. IHS in particular refuses to help regulate drinking water utilities, thus threatening public health. Use of the EPA tribal set asides from the SRFs and service grants are often overseen by IHS. We could create an efficiency by just giving our \$ over to IHS and close down the EPA tribal infrastructure programs if IHS can agree to become a co-regulator. Their extensive presence in Indian country would provide better oversight than the few trips a year to utilities the EPA regions can afford to send staff on.

Separately, HUD and BIA \$ are used to build personal and commercial structures without planning for drinking water and waste water utilities, leaving EPA and IHS to play catch up and bring those services to pop up communities.

increase agency accountability to the public by taking access to public data and information out of the FOIA process and post more on our website. in my opinion, many managers care more about the agency's rep and their position in it than the mission of protecting public health and the environment (e.g. EPA's slow action on Flint MI).

We could reduce cost by changing management structure and cutting SES middle management positions. Flatten the management structure with more upper and lower management and zero to few middle managers. Given the top down management and communications structure of EPA; middle managers are in many facets irrelevant. They do very little to inform the direction of the agency (that comes from above them). Their knowledge of program administration is very general and given their lack of authority they can do very little to allow program administration to evolve over time (e.g keep up with technology for data reporting). Middle managers do very little to provide opportunities for staff development beyond interacting with staff on the major issues of the moment. Our first line managers approve staff training and higher level managers create/implement development programs from above the middle managers. Our first line managers are spread thin having to deal with HR duties on top of reporting to middle managers to keep them informed on program/project details so middle managers can then tell upper managers what the first line managers told them.

In my opinion there is way to many layers of management that add very little to the process of protecting public health and the environment. This is true in my Region and I think HQ as well where so many people are involved in producing very little. In general HQ provides little tangible production and serves more as an impediment to progress through interference and meddling. HQ lack of understanding of what is actually happening in the field and in our communities is likely the main cause of their failure. To fix these issues I would reorganize the regional programs to remove as many middle management positions as possible. Give more responsibility to the staff to make decisions. Delegate authorities as much as possible. Why do we have administrative tasks being performed by Division Directors? As far as HQ - If the President really wants to reduce the workforce at EPA by 4,000 jobs most of them should come from Washington DC where very little actual tangible and measurable work to support our core mission gets accomplished.

I think the States could be given more work within my Program (Superfund). But to do this they would have to significantly bulk up their resources and capabilities and be given a significant pot of money. In my Region we have effective States but they do not apply their resources to their environmental programs. Instead they constantly skimp and claim lack of funds. Often they try and push for self regulation which is a failure. If EPA was to scale back and rely more on the States to implement the federal programs we would have to give them a lot of money. In Superfund we already do a lot of partnering with States and local communities. It is an inherent part of our process. Other than asking more from them the only other thing I would change with the States is to try and implement improved communication between EPA and the DEPs. Create liaison positions whose job it is to facilitate that across the programs.

I think in my program we provide really good service. I think we need more funding and more latitude to use our authorities to get things accomplished in the Removal Program. Superfund Removal is a fast response, high energy, goal oriented group that gets things done. Yet our low funding levels and our management's preoccupation with not doing work to save money hurts us. We should be broadening our authorities in order to use our field expertise to solve problems across the agency programs. Our management tends to be very tunnel visioned with little or no global outlook on the Agency mission as a whole. One specific recommendation as mentioned earlier would be to appoint positions to liaison with the states so that it is someone's main job to coordinate.

YES - reduce the bureaucracy by reducing the size of regional management and the size and influence of HQ in Washington. Empower the highly qualified staff to make decisions. Delegate administrative duties down to lower management and staff levels. A full reorganization of the Agency is in order but I'm not sure the Agency can do it on its own. Past reorganizations have failed. The President wants to cut the workforce - figure out how to remove managers and poor performing older employees. Change the RIF process to get away from seniority based firings. You MUST keep the new hires and the younger people - they are the future of the agency and have the motivation and work ethic.

Administrative issues and responses to HQ take up most of our managers time. As a result, they have lost technical abilities, decision making capabilities when it comes to protecting the environment and general knowledge of science. We are bogging our managers down with so much paperwork they are no more than glorified secretaries. Empower the staff, delegate the minutia. Have management focus on the real work.

Obviously in Superfund if we have the states do more of the work (delegate the program?) then EPA could reduce its workforce and its role. But right now in Superfund EPA is the lead. If we were to delegate the program then the States would really have to beef up their resources and step up to the plate and spend money on the environment. I'm not sure they are up to that task.

Empower the staff - at EPA that is the best resource. Management and HQ are often just in the way and an impediment to progress.

Top of the list is contracts. The contracting process is broken. It is a very rare contract which is recompleted on time. Contract extensions are routine but also last minute. This leads to additional cost and creates a planning and workflow nightmare.

Changes in technology and IT services is creating a sea change in data collection, storage, analysis and transparency. Purpose defined sensors (e.g. air and water pollution detection) are rapidly increasing in quality and decreasing in price leading to the expectation of large amounts of quality environmental data becoming available soon. The easy ability to combine this data with other data (e.g. asthma medication data use) using data and tools from private companies like Google and IBM is going to reveal a much better understanding of pollution. It has the potential for revealing localized problems as well as previously unknown links between pollution and disease, pollution and life style choices etc. Working with the Googles and IBMs of the world as this technology is rapidly developing will help the public have a more accurate understanding of what is a real result versus spurious correlations.

There are many vehicles for working with the States. Over the past few years, the establishment of the E-Enterprise Leadership Council (EELC), a joint partnership between EPA and ECOS, has developed a cooperative relationship at a very high level. State Commissioners have gained access to what was previously more a flow of information to them and is now a sharing of decision making and involvement. A perfect example of this is the involvement of State members of the EELC being directly involved in EPA budget discussions with OMB.

The EELC has the ability to sponsor projects which can reduce burden to private companies and State agencies while improving efficiency and environmental protection. Empowering that group to sponsor work and at some level to direct resources for these investments would be a significant step in the power sharing between EPA and the States.

There are many ancient and silo'ed information systems at EPA and the States. They waste time and money, sometimes in large amounts when the inefficiencies are factored in. However, to fix these things takes time and resources, even with the newer IT approaches (e.g. Agile design) and improvements in IT technology. Smart but not insignificant investments need to be made to make environmental protection and economic growth accelerate. Of course, the first step in looking at modernizing a system is to use a process such as LEAN to streamline the underlying program requirements.

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We have many experts in EPA who specialize in data analysis and visualization. Due to the inability to access private sector tools for a variety of reasons (e.g. cost or security issues), they are effectively either doing more limited assessments or duplicating tools and approaches which already exist in the private sector. To the extent that cost is a factor in this, it is a false savings since resources used to recreate what exists in the private sector (often of higher sophistication) often exceeds the cost of purchase of the private sector product.

There is currently feeling within the EPA that we cannot speak freely for fear of retribution from the new Administration. This is the result of the new Administration's obvious efforts to undermine environmental programs (e.g., climate change, waters of the US, etc.) and silence critics. Even though this survey is "anonymous" there is fear that it really isn't. Until the new Administration wins the trust of career employees, there will be an impediment to EPA fulfilling its mission.

Act in the best interests of the public instead of trying to protect select industries (i.e., coal). Undermining prior collaborative efforts (i.e., climate change) that were underway creates a tremendous inefficiency. It only delays the inevitable and hurts everyone in the long run. Support efforts by states (i.e., CA) that wish to go beyond national minimal standards.

Be transparent in all actions. Support efforts by states (i.e., CA) that wish to go beyond national minimal standards.

Undermining prior collaborative efforts (i.e., climate change) that were underway in the prior Administration creates a tremendous inefficiency and wastes taxpayer dollars. It only delays the inevitable and hurts everyone in the long run. Embrace energy efficiency programs. This is what will lead the US to a better future. Embracing coal, a dated fuel source, sets us back and allows the rest of the world to catch up or pass us.

Undermining prior activities (i.e., climate change) that were underway in the prior Administration creates a tremendous inefficiency and wastes taxpayer dollars. It only delays the inevitable and hurts everyone in the long run. The new Administration isn't reinventing the wheel, they are destroying it. Embrace energy efficiency programs. This is what will lead the US to a better future. Embracing coal, a dated, costly, and dirty fuel source, sets us back and allows the rest of the world to catch up or pass us.

Undermining or dropping prior "best practices" (e.g., Clean Power Plan and related climate change efforts) underway in the prior Administration creates a tremendous inefficiency and wastes taxpayer dollars. It only delays the inevitable and hurts everyone in the long run. Embrace energy efficiency programs. This is what will lead the US to a better future. Embracing coal, a dated, costly, and dirty fuel source, sets us back and allows the rest of the world to catch up or pass us.

We need to move to document processing electronically. Simple things like document routing for concurrences should be done electronically, but we don't have the appropriate computer programs to do that. We've attempted it in the past by trying to adapt Microsoft SharePoint to do the job but it did not work because that is not what SharePoint was designed to do.

Electronic signatures is something else we need to explore doing, in order to expedite document processing.

When it comes to pesticide labeling, we need some kind of label matching software so that we don't have to look at two labels manually side by side. This is very labor intensive and a computer could do this much more accurately than a human could.

Also we need to move to electronic inspection forms and tablet computers, we still use paper forms and notebooks. This would provide much faster review of the inspection once we get back to the office.

We need to get actual IT software support that we can actually trust to do a good job. Every project I have heard about goes over budget and is delayed because we don't have good programmers.

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I do not believe it is necessary that we report public meetings/presentations that we will be giving all the way up to our Regional Administrator and HQ. In the past, our direct supervisors and perhaps Division Directors have had the ability and knowledge to approve our external presentations, and this has always been fine. We should go back to that and trust that our appointed employees have the knowledge to accurately present topics related to EPA.

Pruitt should resign. He has no credibility and people won't follow him.

It is very difficult in awarding grants to the states and tribes when the budget is delayed well into the fiscal year. 2-4 actions needed to be taken where one action should be all that is needed to award a grant. This is a huge waste of resources and hurts our partnerships with states and tribes.

We currently work extensively with states and local communities, and I feel that those relationships are strong and vital to the work that EPA accomplishes. We should continue to harbor these relationships via grants, in person meetings and being available as technical experts if needed.

More consistent funding. Funding levels have been dropping over the years but the need is still there for all of these environmental programs.

As mentioned above, being at important in person meetings, providing technical assistance, and providing and managing existing grant programs. We should not cut grant programs that states, tribes and local governments depend on.

We are understaffed and it is getting worse not better. For improved customer service, we need more staff to be available to work with our partners effectively and efficiently. Also, keeping the regional offices intact would help maintain these partnerships.

One thing I've identified that could save money is related to travel. Currently, we receive a daily per diem for food costs, and receive that amount even if that amount is not spent. Rather than do it this way, why not cap daily food costs at a certain amount, and then only reimburse for what is actually spent, signified by receipts. As an example, if there is a \$50 cap per day, and only \$37 is spent on food, we should only be reimbursed for the \$37 (which will be verified by scanned receipts) rather than \$50. This would save on money that is currently just given to employees.

I feel very effective with a new laptop, EC500 for phones, and my own conference call line. I think all employees should have a personal conference call line if necessary. It is very embarrassing to work with the public and not have a conference call line free to use.

Empowering first and second line supervisors (and even some employees!) to make decisions and help form the direction of projects is key. Having to report high up the management chain and even to HQ on easy decisions creates log jams and wastes time. Wasted time is wasted money.

The updates to systems always cause problems on Monday morning for log-in. These updates should happen on Friday after midnight.

A more active role in the community, not just for major holidays or earth day events.

Actually spend more than a day in a community within your region.

Designate a Accountability Coach to make sure things are constantly being done to improve the environment in each region from employees already within EPA and no additional salary.

Employees at the state level should be more engaged and more active in the community.
Federal programs should be introduced that actually work

Since lots of people work from home, ELIMINATE transportation subsidies. If you're not coming into the office 5/five days a week, there should be no transportation assistance to work

Apple computers and more knowledgeable IT personnel.
Microsoft Office 2016 (we are now using 2010 in 2017)

Too many agencies and no work seems to be done or in a timely manner. Consolidate agencies and realign work duties.
Reduce salaries (concessions to save money for the government)

Job Share -

Hire contractors as permanent employees who have a proven track record for performance and attendance, GS5 or GS6

-

If more than 20 years and no advancement, the employee should retire just like in the military, if you aren't a E6 or above -

Part Time employment working from home and the employee pays HIGHER medical benefits because you're not coming into the office -

Unnecessary travel eliminated -

Use video conference for meetings around the country on a SECURE network which reduces travel cost, hotel cost and food cost -

Raises should be based on performance and not across the board because of a increase by Congress.

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IT infrastructure and software is outdated and inefficient. For example, the agency has partnered with the DOI to use FPPS for HR functions. It is practically a DOS-based system that is entirely non-intuitive relative to windows-based systems used in all other functions of administrative support.

Excess passwords requirement. Establish the credential for logging on to your computer.

Improving and streamlining mechanisms that establish partnerships with these entities. Even without money exchanging hands, it can take months to years to establish interagency agreements, or in the case of private sectors, establish CRADAs. Most EPA staff are very familiar with and have great professional relationships with state, tribal, community and private sector counter parts, there is just an impossible amount of paper work to work through in order to establish agreements that meet compliance with statutory requirements of congressional appropriation law.

Have more public outreach. EPA has been shrinking for over a decade and some programs have had to necessarily been significantly reduced or eliminated to preserve core functions of mission. If we don't have the people and staff to reach out and communicate our actions, it is difficult to receive feedback on how to better serve the public.

While I get that the current climate in the Agency is we have too many federal staff, our contract costs are not more efficient or necessarily saving us any money. For years the question has been tilted toward replacing FTE with "cheaper" contract support. From my perspective, the perspective has been shifted to what work can we more cheaply do with FTE than with contract support mechanisms. Further, if we consider that we need significant Federal Staff levels to manage contracts, what efficiencies are really gained? All of this goes to ultimately most efficiently using resources to maintain environmental protection.

ID badges need to operate at all locations. One contract to meet the terms and conditions. Sub-contract to small businesses in the Region(s)

See my response number 1 above.

Periodic IT training for the staff to keep everyone up to date and reduce the need for excessive IT support

Because of the overall federal attrition for quite some time, much of this has been already occurring to the extent possible. I know my organization appropriately collaborates widely with other federal agencies and routinely assists states and tribes.

Well the private sector has the advantage of being able to rely on the timing of a budget and not have 2-3 threats a year for complete shutdown. It is impossible to be responsible stewards of tax payer's money when we don't know what our budget is for the year until 2 months before we need to close out the books for the year. And then as desperate as we may need the resources in support of mission, we don't have the contract administration efficiencies to appropriately make use of those resources so its viewed as not needed. We have actually gone to planning budgetary resources on a hugely variable scale that could mean anything from flat line to decreased resources to a complete shutdown. In the last 10 years, I haven't actually seen an increase in resources so I don't know what we would do in that scenario.

Grant reviews can take longer than needed due to complicated review sheets that break down scoring into redundant and/or too many categories. Beyond an eligibility review, the only scores needed are basically for soundness of project approach, milestones/deliverables/timeline, qualifications/expertise of applicant, soundness of budget, and past performance. It should not take an hour to fill out a proposal review scorecard.

Encourage states to integrate next-generation/real-time monitoring into permits and state Performance Track-type programs. Such monitoring information might lessen the need for enforcement resources. Put more personnel and resources into compliance and technical assistance for sectors with higher pollution concerns/potential.

The current climate change denial stance by agency leadership, and other stances counter to best available science, need to be corrected. We are losing credibility in the eyes of other levels of government as well as the private sector, which will reduce opportunities to form effective, cost-leveraging partnerships with those organizations. These stances also create mistrust among EPA employees. Most of us are very common-sense people. People who review permits, state plans, etc. have very strong knowledge of changes that could be made to improve efficiency and relationships with the regulated community. They are a huge source of ideas. However, they will not want to work with agency leadership to implement those ideas if leadership is taking stances or actions that run counter to our mission. The public at large (including my Trump-voting parents) is concerned about the impacts of climate change and wants clean energy and clean tech to flourish in the US. We should listen to them.

Explore advance air/water/land monitoring technologies that could lessen the need for enforcement resources/inspections.

Improve cooperation with DOE on energy efficiency and renewable energy.

836 5/10/2017

837 5/10/2017

The PARS ranking system is demoralizing. The ranking categories (FS, EE, Outstanding, etc) are based on extremely subjective criteria. Some managers are "easy graders" and others believe that an "Outstanding" should never be awarded. (I've received Gold medals and still not received an "Outstanding" from one manager while I used to receive them annually from another) This ranking system has a very negative effect on work performance. The private sector is moving away from it entirely as it makes individuals less concerned about the effectiveness of teamwork and more concerned about how their individual contribution is viewed by management.

Focusing on the best interests of industry over environmental protection prevents me from doing my job efficiently and effectively.

It's hard to partner with states, tribes and even the private sector when our scientific integrity has been compromised. In my 25 years at EPA, I never witnessed States or consultants publicly question and even make jokes about EPA's commitment to protecting human health and the environment. That has changed. EPA is now the butt of joke thanks to our recent refusal to embrace scientific consensus and the scientific method.

More resources and people to accomplish the EPAs mission.

Integrity, integrity, integrity. We are a scientific and regulatory agency. We should take both roles seriously. Scientific and technical experts at EPA should be valued, not made to feel that if they don't go into management, they have somehow failed. In the Regions, technical experts are capped at the GS13 level (for some reason, HQ allows for a lot more employees to advance to the 14 level.) EPA needs to attract the best and the brightest if we expect to perform our duties and not become the dysfunctional and overly bureaucratic government agency that some accuse us of being.

More resources and people to accomplish the EPAs mission.

Mu understanding is that EPA's budget represents less than 0.2% of USG spending. We are charged with ensuring that people have safe water to drink, safe air to breath, and safe soil to till. While reducing inefficiencies is always important, there comes a point where the lack of spending is the source of the inefficiencies. This is the question that should be asked. I have seen EPA waste exorbitant amounts of money "fixing" a problem through brick and mortar infrastructure that could have been fixed via our regulatory tools. The problem is that we lacked the technical staff necessary to have caught the problem. This is often times the true source of government waste.

No, we are understaffed and under budget.

Yes, increasing Internet speeds in offices to levels that are on par with the private sector. I worked in an ORD lab and couldn't use their GIS software because the Internet speed was so slow.

There are a lot of field sampling and laboratory techniques that could be modernized and make things more efficient, but we need more resources and more employees. An automated ELISA is an example of something that makes ELISA analysis more efficient.

We are supposed to be providing an oversight role to States. We do that.

Create liaison positions for communicating with other federal agencies.

Yes, private sector provides a travel budget that typically allows for their professionals to attend trainings, speak at conferences, and maintain their technical skills. EPA used to provide for that type of training and travel budget, but those day, especially at the Regional offices, are gone.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

838 5/10/2017

839 5/10/2017

(1) Administrative Issues: Care should be taken not push people who are different into administrative positions. Agency Managers seem to place diverse individuals into mostly administrative positions and/or assign administrative projects to diverse professionals. I've seen some well-educated professional employees relegated to administrative assignments (e.g. driving managers to visit various communities, planning conferences, helping to carrying out grant requirements that are the responsibility of another office, entering information into office databases, etc.). EPA management should be sure to use the talents and education of employees appropriately. It doesn't seem appropriate to have a GS-13 professional employee spending their time on filing and record-keeping.

(2) Revise Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Retirement Rules and Remove IRS Penalties. The OPM rules are the reason EPA employees hang on so long to their jobs. The OPM rules for retirement and accessing the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) funds keep people chained to EPA for 30 years just so they can access their investment fund without IRS penalties. Remove this requirement and employees are likely to jump ship on a more regular basis allowing the Agency to hire new talent. Consider have the special earlier retirement ages in the Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) as just a regular full retirement option ??? even consider lower ages for accessing TSP funds to maybe 10 or 15 years which will encourage turnover. The Federal government does not need to act like mom and dad and force employees to keep all their retirement money in one spot for 30 years. Many employees are financially saavy and could invest the funds in other ways if the funds could be removed earlier. Other private setups such as certain police retirement set-ups allow no-penalty exits for retirement accounts. Federal government should consider other options as well by reviewing other types of retirement structures.

(3) EPA start time is 9:30 a.m. Many supervisors in different media divisions allow employees to routinely start beyond the 9:30 a.m. start of business day, while other supervisors strictly enforce the 9:30 start time. Employees always share this type of info amongst each other so there's no hiding the fact. The situation doesn't appear to be based upon performance because those held to the rules have good performance ratings. This makes employees wonder why only certain ones are held to the rules, while others are continuously allowed to have more privilege. This is another example of the rampant favoritism at EPA.

The current process and expectations for contract actions vary between Contract Officers in OAM. The creation of a consistent process with set lists of documents and requirements that all C.O.s would follow plus a set process given to the CORs and those putting in PRs would be extremely helpful.

Managers should be held accountable for lack of diversity: EPA management does not appear to follow the Diversity Action Plan, nor do they appear to be familiar with prohibited hiring practices under the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. There should be some mechanism during the hiring process where they must certify they have at least read through these documents and made an effort to comply. There should be some place where the Agency managers must show they have looked broadly to try to find diverse candidates and attempt to mirror the demographics of the regional office area that is covered by the Agency. Today, the hiring of young students with advanced degrees and zero experience in the real world is the norm. They are quickly bumped up to GS-13 expert levels, not based upon experience in the agency, but sometimes by personal friendships with managers and favoritism by management. This practice will negatively affect the Agency in the long-term both in dealing with the regulated community as well as the personal job satisfaction and morale of all employees at the Agency. Hiring people with experience working with states/tribes/industry/urban communities etc., will allow for trusting relationships to be built and for meaningful interactions between all parties.

(1) Address favoritism in hiring: Take steps to avoid the constant practice of "like-hiring-like". Basically, everyone is the same at EPA - liberal and/or elite. Anyone that is different will not get hired. EPA is now likely facing the same situation that the Democrats/Hillary Clinton faced when the election was lost. When an Agency becomes too one-sided, like EPA has become, it creates a situation where the regulated public and stakeholders do not get a say in the process until late in the game - at the public comment period on regulatory development. EPA should try harder to recruit and hire the appropriate mix of diverse people with diverse perspectives and include those individuals on the Agency's national rulemaking work group efforts. This will allow more people that can think outside the box to develop more creative options for consideration during development of draft regulations. Having an Agency full of one type of managers and employees does not allow effective and efficient interactions with states, tribes, local communities, the regulated community and the public at large.

(2) Restructure the hiring process: The government hiring process does not create a diverse pool of well-qualified candidates. The current system was simplified for the government human resources staff to more quickly carry out hiring, but it seems to exclude those that are honest and have the personal integrity not to embellish about work experience. The current hiring system is now just choosing multiple choice answers to hiring questions. It favors those that embellish their experience, rather than those who are honest. The people that embellish rise to the top of the list and get interviews. Those that are honest never even make the list. There are also no multiple-choice questions asking about experiences working with other agencies or communities. These types of questions should be weighted and scored highly to ensure the Agency gets people with experience in private industry, diverse communities, other agencies, etc.

Create a single call center / help desk for all public inquires and work with the AAships and offices to create canned language and answers for the public.

(1) Safety Issues with Federal Fleet: The maintenance and safety of the federal vehicle fleet needs to be addressed. The vehicles are often poorly maintained and dirty, resulting in safety issues for employees that must travel. Vehicles have bald tires that are well beyond the maximum mileage life. In one instance with these types of old tires, one went flat resulting in a potential stranding situation for the employee alone in a remote wilderness area. Employees often start traveling only to find the vehicle gas tank empty or the maintenance light on - requiring oil changes, service, etc. No one appears to address these issues (not the traveling employee, nor the manager responsible for the fleet). Showing up to an outdoor tour or meeting with states/tribes/stakeholders in a broken down federal vehicle is an embarrassment and only contributes to the poor view of federal government employees. If the vehicles cannot be properly managed and maintained, then use of Privately Owned Vehicles (POVs) and/or and rental cars should be presented at the time of federal vehicle reservation when maintenance is flagged is an issue. If the reservation system for federal vehicles cannot be adjusted to show an employee the maintenance status of the vehicle, consider getting rid of federal vehicles entirely and allow use of rental cars and POVs. This would likely be a huge savings to the government - not having to buy and maintain federal vehicles.

(2) Allow employees with good performance reviews to work at home more often, resulting in savings to the government (e.g. no transit subsidy to commute to Chicago, no electricity costs, etc.). Also, consider having a team of experts that work on issues on a national level and can be located anywhere outside of the regional office. For example, a team of EPA employees with tribal experience could be called upon as sort of a think-tank to resolve tribal environmental issues that may arise in any location across the country. Demonstrated good performance and ability to work independently is key, however, for the success of this option.

An easy way to locate what desktop software packages are allowed and preferred for various and available to users rather than referring users to the "GSA schedule".

EPA has not kept up with the private sector on technology. EPA has had the Windows 7 Operating System until 2017 when EPA finally started switching to Windows 10. Staff working at home on their own personal computers often have better technical abilities than at the office. Remote access is not reliable. It's improved recently, but when first rolled out it was a nightmare often forcing employees to call a national number to trouble-shoot on government work time, only to find it wasn't a problem with their own personal system, but that of the government system. Computer laptops are old and slow as well. Having a screen go blank for several seconds to log in or switch to another program is frustrating. Security seems lax as well with many government employees having their personal information compromised by a security breach a few years ago.

Allowing the EPA to utilize drone technology for cleanup and emergency response

EPA provides grant funding for general water quality monitoring and assessment. U.S. Geological Survey also carries out these activities in a seemingly duplicative manner. There could be some ideas here for reducing the costs to the government.

We should create a policy relating to Personally Identifiable Information (PII) similar to those implemented at the US Census Bureau (Title 13) or the Internal Revenue Service (Title 26) to consistently define expectations for the public about what data we collect, how we use it and how we secure it, and how and to whom we release the data to

(1) The current awards system should be restructured. It seems to reward the same people repeatedly (usually legal cases) resulting in poor morale amongst those that never even get a nomination for an award. The current system (medals and regional awards) has so many categories which results in a lot of time/effort to recognize employees with very little increase in morale within the Agency. In fact, it seems to contribute to poor morale. The system also seems burdensome to management. There's a lot of work time spent writing up awards, participating on panels and attending awards ceremonies. This isn't a good image for the public that EPA is rewarding itself. We should be spending our time on environmental protection. Maybe have our stakeholders put in nominations for EPA staff that have really helped them throughout the years, or consider scraping the system entirely and just providing a monetary award for good performance. Linking each of the performance categories to a certain amount of monetary award will remove the favoritism component providing an award to ALL who perform well. Those that do not perform well will have a monetary incentive to improve.

(2) Stop rewarding bad employees and ensure fairness for good employees. The Agency seems to reward bad employees with more privileges! Some of these employees can work at home 5 days/per week whereas employees with good performance are limited to 2 days/week. Consider making the work at home privilege an incentive for poor performers. For example, those with the three top performance ratings should be allowed to work at home 5 days/week because they have demonstrated ability to accomplish work wherever they may be located. Those that have unsatisfactory performance should get the minimum 2 days with the incentive to increase the time at home if performance improves. Right now, EPA has the situation reversed and it creates bad morale amongst employees. Allowing work at home for good performing employees will also save the government money on transit subsidies, maintenance of cubes and furniture, computer equipment, electricity and heat costs.

(3) Different hiring options: Consider a separate track of hiring based upon a different method of identification and recruitment. Many highly qualified diverse candidates have been hired due to a personal search by managers to find the special skills required for a position. These managers are few and far between, but made a special effort to look at resumes for well-qualified candidates, to make personal phone calls just to coach the candidate through the federal hiring process. Perhaps the Agency can maintain a pool of resumes with special skill sets (e.g. Engineers working on oil and gas issues, scientists working with Indian tribes, other Agency or military experts with various skill sets, etc.) and hire those people to work on issues that span across all EPA regions. With the ability to work from remote locations,

Excessive review of work products by headquarters staff and management has introduced inefficiency into various work processes. While the regional staff and management understand the need for national consistency, standard or non-controversial actions should be left to the regions to complete, to limit the waste of time and resources.

Investment in more high quality administrative staff could increase overall efficiency. In the 10 years I have worked at EPA, I have seen a large amount of administrative tasks transferred from administrative staff to the staff at large. This results in GS-12 and 13 (or higher) employees spending significant amounts of time on work that could be completed by lower GS level staff and the associated waste of money on personnel costs.

Focusing resources on the regional offices, which are closer geographically and have better knowledge of local issues than headquarters and other "centralized" offices like ORD. Making coordination with state, local, and private partners a meaningful focus of performance reviews.

Minimizing travel by headquarters staff to distant (and costly) locations by focusing on having regional staff represent the agency at in-person meetings, conferences, etc. The regional staff are often more familiar with the local issues anyway and can work closely with states and localities at a lower cost than sending headquarters employees.

As stated above, making coordination with and support of state, local, and private partners a meaningful focus of staff performance reviews. Minimizing time spent on internal (within EPA) meetings and activities and focusing time and energy on relationships and support of external partners.

Improving performance reviews, including dealing more aggressively with low performing employees and rewarding those who excel to encourage high performance.

Commitment to efforts such as "Lean Six Sigma," including requiring managers to implement all reasonable recommendations that result from Lean projects. I have participated in Lean activities, and employees are willing to seek improvements to EPA processes, but they need the support of high level management to get beyond the weight of "business as usual" pressure against change.

Staff cuts can be made while still maintaining environmental protection. They should be done gradually, through attrition and through early retirement and buyouts, so as to minimize disruption and resulting waste of time and resources. Efforts should be made, where possible, to assign the appropriate amount of staff in appropriate locations, e.g., there should be more staff working on air quality issues in regions with more non-attainment areas and less staff in areas with less air quality challenges. Efforts to cut or reassign staff should be focused on areas where work could be done by the academic, non-governmental, or private sector. For example, much of ORD is seen as a "black box" to the rest of EPA. Their research and tools should either be more aggressively shared throughout EPA so that more EPA staff could use their work and make it available to states and localities, or disinvestment should occur if they can't become more "customer oriented."

Workload analysis should become a regular and ongoing part of staff management, rather than simply replacing every position that is vacated through retirement. Management should not be encouraged to hire simply because FTE is available, without regard to whether a sufficient workload exists. They should also have the security that when workload does exist, it will be covered by sufficient staff resources.

Encourage continued or increased use and availability of "sharing" technologies such as SharePoint and OneDrive so as to allow for more efficient electronic transfer of documents and information. Focus IT investment on support of networking to encourage productive remote work. Also focus on deployment and training of staff on videoconferencing equipment so that staff are more comfortable and efficient at using this technology, which could save on travel costs when used appropriately.

Focus EPA staff and resources on areas where EPA has a "value-added" role. In regulatory programs this is determined by law, but in our voluntary programs, this should be determined by providing EPA expertise where it is unique and adds value, e.g. providing expertise on mitigation of environmental impacts, best management practices, avoiding impacts to air and water quality, etc., to other federal agencies as they engage in funding or technical assistance to states and localities.

Promotions based on performance rather than tenure (example of DOD, though successful implementation has been mixed); Lean Six Sigma process improvements and implementation.

I think as federal employees we do way too much administrative work, whether it be running around getting comp time forms signed, filling out TA's and getting them signed by 5 different people, logging into the numerous accounts we have to have that all require special passwords. A great deal of my time is often consumed by these tasks that could be done by an administrative assistant or done electronically instead of on a paper form. It should not take more than half a day to set up your travel.

When a new employee starts, why do we not already have a computer set up with the programs the division knows they will need? Instead of going through the IT department and several help-desk and form to be signed by managers stating that you do in fact need these programs and software install in order to do your job. There should already be an approved list of programs installed and ready to be used on ones computer by assigned division, type of work, by sector, etc.

It shouldn't be demanded that we follow an order, but have nothing in place to replace the old way of doing something. For instance, we now have to submit a travel form online, but we have no way of accessing it, but it has been demanded through an executive order that we do this. How can we do something if we do not have the means to do it. On top of that, we can no longer access the old system and there is no way to accomplish the task now.

Rather than everyone being taught how to do a TA it would be be a lot more efficient and less errors ??? consolidation! ??? rather than everyone doing their own and trying to figure out a frustrating system that no one completely understands. We can just turn in the dates they want and the travel person could try and make it happen. No more discrepancies and It is done correctly and it would be harder to cheat the system. Have one person per sector/division or whatever that is an expert and handles the TA's instead of every individual wasting time trying to figure it out. This could be implemented for many things.

I don't have enough experience on this topic to make a viable comment.

No comment

No comment

Having devices that allow field workers to use apps related to the work they do would accomplish wonders. There is almost an app for everything, whether it be plant identification, stream indicators, or environmental hazards. If they are not readily available or capable of doing what we want we could easily contract it out and have it developed specifically to meet our needs. Not only that, we could cut down on the numerous/repetitive forms we have to fill out for the same project or task by compiling them all into one easy to find location where you could sign into an account and put documents pending in a sort of queue that allows you to see who's "desk" your forms are sitting on and who needs to sign what and fill out what in order for the process to proceed. This would allow agencies to pin point inefficiencies in the process and see where work is being held up and by whom and take corrective action if it continues to be a problem.

Communication!

Amazon, Apple, google... take your pick

842 5/10/2017

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Disagreements are inevitable giving varying missions of agencies involved. You can use facilitation and mediation to help those involved communicate more effectively. These uses of Alternative Dispute Resolution have been shown to produce results all involved can understand and implement without the need for going to court or getting overly political. Support the continuation of both workplace and environmental conflict resolution.

Also, EPA has both an ADR Policy and a Public Involvement Policy. More knowledge and use of the best practices described in these policies would help everyone communicate and cooperate with each other. Many times a neutral facilitator (someone who is not EPA and not one of the other parties) is necessary for all to believe a process is fair. The use of neutral facilitators needs to be funded.

Regions should receive extra travel \$ to use for paying for state / local officials travel to meetings with EPA (either in the office or in the field) so that the state (or local) folks can actually provide input to EPA's strategy, planning, and implementation of programs. Preferably, some of that money could come from specific HQ program budgets. Travel money is a pretty small part of our budget, but it could make it much easier and more efficient for us to support the needs and goals of the states.

EPA's Public Involvement Policy outlines how to better work with any stakeholder. Read it, google good public involvement principles. Involve public involvement experts in helping to design interactions and communications. Fund travel for EPA employees to meet communities, tribes, regulated community and others in person. It can reduce misunderstandings and build trusting relationships. Isolating EPA people in their offices without any means to see people in person unless those people have the time and money to come to EPA offices is unproductive.

Use good public involvement and dispute resolution resources inside the agency. Give these processes time and resources to work.

Connect EPA's ADR and public involvement programs with other federal agencies. Make these resources known to states. Work through varying missions, roles and responsibilities. Make sure the public and regulated industry know who is really responsible for what. Hold state agencies accountable where there are delegated programs. It was the State of Michigan that did not protect the citizens of Flint, not EPA.

EPA's environmental ADR and public involvement programs have led the way for 30 years - establishing best practices for conflict resolution, collaboration and public involvement. Recognize that federal employees can indeed be world renowned experts in these fields and empower them to continue to educate the administration and EPA employees in best practices. Publicize when we are successful and give some credit to those who work well with others - not just in public service recognition week, but all the time.

844 5/10/2017

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1) We still have a manual concurrence process in the Region. I would recommend an electronic concurrence process to route a documents through the concurrence process.

2) The Superfund remedial program is embarking on a large change in the contracting strategy which will impact the implementation of the Superfund program. Changes will begin to take effect in the Fall of 2018 when EPA awards the first of this new suite of contracts. One change that I think should be considered is that we do not move forward with a Remedial Environmental Services Contract (RES). I think the current model that has been set up works and is more efficient. EPA does not have the resources to manage the RES contract.

Issue: Severe political interference in science issues. Solution: Remove all political appointees from federal science agencies.

We currently partner with the States in the Superfund program and only take on Sites that the State does not have the enforcement or financial resources to address. In the SF program, the State is required to cost share 10% of the remedial action cost and 100% of the O&M at the Site. The States are under tremendous financial constraints and are often not able to fund their environmental responsibilities. This often causes issues between the State and EPA regarding responsibilities. My idea would be for EPA to have 100% responsibility for the Superfund program. However, for this to work properly, the funding would have to come with it.

In the Superfund program, we have very good customer service with our states, tribes, and communities. I think other areas of EPA could model their customer service after the Superfund program.

The current budget cycle impacts the SF program and leads to many inefficiencies. First, the budget that is provided, is often not sufficient to address the backlog of work in the SF program. As a result, instead of fully funding the work required for the investigation and cleanup of a Site, the work is phased over several years. This leads to inefficiencies and delays in completing the work.

Let scientists do their work. Don't burden them with mandatory non-useful tasks, such as preparing travel documents, administrative trainings, etc.

State of the art IT services. The government often contracts these services out and we are often behind industry standards in the use of hardware and software. In the last year, things have improved. However, in the program that I work in (Superfund) tablets would be very beneficial. However, we often do not get state of the hardware because of budget constraints.

Absolutely - there are numerous new technologies for monitoring air and water quality. Funds and personnel are needed to purchase, evaluate and operate these technologies.

The Superfund program has the ability to use Interagency Agreements with the Army Corp of Engineers to perform construction acquisition and management at fund lead Superfund Sites. This has been a successful model for the last 30 years. However, there are acquisition plans within EPA to change that model and drastically reduce our ability to use the Army Corp. This will require EPA to be the construction manager on many fund lead SF sites. The resources have not been provided to the agency for this effort. I believe this is an inefficient use of government funds. The program should rely on the construction expertise of the Corp and not try to re-invent the wheel at EPA.

Outsource PC imaging / security so the entire agency has one operating system image & one security system - hopefully to NSA or DOD.

That each of the 20 Regions/MNMs define their own OS/security is archaic. Each has its own regional ISO - this could be centrally managed.

It is amazing the amount of down time with re-entry of LoginIDs and PassWords has to be done each day.

Adopt a functioning electronic grant system from another agency that has a 'best in class' operation and revise EPA processes/requirements so EPA doesn't tailor it to their own vision. That is where we go wrong.

Same with Time Tracking / Travel / etc. - our systems are not by any means 'best in class'. One government - one set of HR processes.

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The administrative processes and systems in place to support those processes are nearly unworkable across the board. OARM and OEI are primarily responsible for these types of activities. Our procurement actions have been at a near stand still for several years and OAM is understaffed and unaccountable to the delays in procurement leading to inefficient use of resources and inability to perform mission critical activities. Additionally the IT systems related to contracting, HR, payroll, etc are arcane, dense and not even remotely user friendly. The IT support for our basic equipment such as computers, printers, mobile devices, etc is inefficient and baffling. All of these failings leads to loss of productivity, inability to plan, redundancy and waste of resources. Solutions to solving these issues include lifting the hiring freeze to staff up all administrative functions with competent and skilled professionals, allow stability across OARM (no reorgs, restructuring, details) to build accountability, a base of knowledge and vastly simplified processes. Also, early and frequent engagement with program offices/customers of these processes and systems with an ability and willingness to actually make improvements and changes based on feedback could help. Finally, reconsider the focus on consolidation of administrative functions (e.g. shared service centers) or unsuitable IT systems from other Agencies (e.g., FPPS) or at least re-evaluate at regular and transparent intervals to allow for improvements and changes.

People Plus is absurd - we are salaried employees. I understand the necessity for leave requests and tracking of those, but the rest of the system places a burden on both management and staff.

Provide sufficient resources and clear lines of decision making across all Agency activities. Engage with the career staff and experts on issue areas. This will allow for meaningful interactions within statutory and regulatory obligations (e.g., consultation, public hearings, public comment periods, transparency of calendars of senior leadership etc) and lead to improved results and actions that will garner support and withstand legal scrutiny.

Similar to above, engage the career staff and experts, provide sufficient resources, establish clear lines of decision making and transparency across all actions. This will allow the Agency, its staff and its stakeholders to interact in a meaningful way to fulfill the mission of the Agency which is actually protecting human health and the environment.

Yes, detailed in the answer to question number 1 there are numerous inefficient, opaque, duplicative, immovable processes that underlie and support the Agencies work. Without proper administrative support, transparent engaged leadership and sufficient resources the Agency will not be able to fulfill its mission.

Yes, again, the answer to question number 1 details numerous systems and process that if improved/replaced will yield significant benefits. In addition, sufficient resources and frequent and transparent communication from leadership to staff, especially in light of the drastic budget proposals will ensure the Agency is able to protect human health and the environment.

This question presumes activities need to be realigned, rather, a comprehensive review of Agency activities in light of clear Agency goals that align with its mission, statutory obligations, needs of the states, all stakeholders and the public, as well as other USG goals, functions and activities should be completed so any realignment comes from an informed place and likely reaches successful implementation. In the past, likely as an attempt to maximize resources the Agency has adopted systems or processes (e.g., FPPS, people plus, etc) from other Agencies without sufficient consider, review or customization that instead leads to inefficient use of resources, delays and inability to achieve Agency goals.

Frequent meetings and transparent communications with staff.

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The processes for awarding contracts and grants have become so overburdened with prohibitions and criteria that staff and recipients waste large amounts of time trying to understand options and requirements. Grants and contracts staff can't coherently explain the byzantine rules to program staff, who spend time that should be spent on core work trying to choose and execute the most efficient method of awarding federal funds to accomplish goals. Grants and contracts staff FTEs have been pared back to the point that they can't afford the time to help much, and are reluctant to take ownership for agreements that just might run afoul of some prohibition. Staff often resort to using mission contracts because processes and criteria for awarding unique contracts are opaque and burdensome, but finding an appropriate mission contract is usually time-consuming and as a spending vehicle usually involves unnecessary overhead cost. Unique grants are similarly difficult to award, and program grants are so burdened with accumulated application criteria and reporting requirements that fewer and fewer eligible parties want to apply. Options need to be bright-lighted (simple decision trees and lists of vehicles would help), terms & conditions need to be pared back, grants & contracts units should be staffed up and measured on how well they serve program needs, and all staff should attend how to spend \$ training. We can only outsource the work that needs to be accomplished via grants & contracts if we have efficient mechanisms, knowledge and support.

Get rid of the silly DUNS requirement.

Annual meetings to communicate among federal and state programs to set priorities, divide responsibility, and coordinate next steps are essential to avoid accidental duplications and omissions. Because state staff increasingly cannot afford to travel to a central location, travel funding should be provided if we want them to take an even greater role in executing federal mandates. Also, it??s become increasingly difficult to stage workshops and conferences to provide essential compliance assistance to the private sector, due to the gradual accretion of prohibitions and rules aimed at avoiding the appearance of wasting federal funds, and favoring or improperly accepting support from private parties; therefore, elaborate requirements should be re-examined and pared back.

Create more collaboration opportunities by committing to regular conferences to discuss pertinent projects, concerns, and progress. Allow more development opportunity for EPA staff by providing EPA staff opportunities for short-terms details with states, tribes, local communities, or the private sector.

Have more EPA funds to work with.

One simple tool would be to post contact info for subject matter experts in HQ, the labs and Regions on our website. The most recent revamp of our agency website for greater uniformity and less maintenance made it difficult to efficiently reach someone who can help you. Simply posting org charts and providing an employee locator isn't enough. An example of how to do it right: <https://www.epa.gov/air-pollution-transportation/office-transportation-and-air-quality-contacts-topic> Also, see answer to Q 7.

Provide EPA staff the resources (FTE and budget) to conduct robust user research and allow for continuous feedback loops between EPA staff and external stakeholders.

More funds and FTE at EPA.

Eliminate unnecessary management layers that have been created by division chiefs bent on building fiefdoms??for example, make section sizes more standard, and eliminate the branch level where total section FTE isn't sufficient to justify a branch. This not only saves \$, but could streamline communications between programs. Sometimes staff-led teams can substitute for forming new units, and can be formed and dissolved more quickly to respond to new and/or temporary needs. Introduce more uniformity in pay grade levels: HQ staff should not necessarily be paid 1 or more grades higher than equivalent Regional staff, attorneys should not necessarily be paid 1-2 grades higher than engineers & scientists, and outstanding staff should be rewarded with annual performance bonuses (and maybe step increases) rather than bump-ups to higher grade levels. On the other hand, trying to hire new scientists, engineers & specialists at GS-7 will result in getting what you pay for: those without other options.

Terminate the employment of all the political appointees.

Our IT help staff & contractors are very efficient and skillful, helping all employees function more efficiently. However, delay in approval for federal use of updated versions of basic software forces IT staff to waste time patching in remedies, and the results function less well than timely upgrades would. Elaborate justification is required for installing specialized software, which can impede our ability to provide compliance assistance to regulated parties.

Yes, we should adopt agile/lean practices and methodologies, modern software development methodologies, look for tools that allow for collaboration with internal and external users.

Accelerate the replacement of Lotus Notes-based IGMS.

The most puzzling area of overlap among federal agencies is in the realm of energy & fuel efficiency programs. For example, EPA's very lean and successful SmartWay Transport Partnership and related technology verification program coexists with DOE's vehicle technologies program. Since EPA regulates engines, it may sense for DOE to cede transportation fuel efficiency programs to EPA. But it may make more sense to move Energy Star, another highly popular efficiency program but one that doesn't relate to EPA's regulatory role, to DOE's office of energy efficiency & renewable energy. Where states have not taken delegation of federal programs, yet have developed similar and equally stringent programs of their own (e.g., NPDES in MA and NH), EPA should force delegation on the states to reduce confusion in the regulated sector, and conserve government resources.

Give EPA the statutory authority for funds in from anywhere, like USDA.
Reduce duplication by letting EPA do it all.

Region 1 has a unique assistance and pollution prevention unit established over 20 years ago as a staff-led team, then made a permanent unit. This unit provides compliance assistance as needed on new and complex requirements, to underserved sectors, using plain-language tools (fact sheets, webinars, workshops, onsite training, etc). All outreach encompasses related federal/state requirements, audience priorities, and cost-saving ways of avoiding the use of regulated substances and processes, thereby reducing regulation. Assistance is coordinated with state agency counterparts, who often later perform additional outreach on their own. Having this function has completely transformed our Region's relationship with the private sector, according to our stakeholders; whereas industry had been reluctant to attend workshops or even call for information, they say they trust our responsiveness, quality of guidance, and our assurance that we won't refer them for enforcement (except in cases of immediate & serious threat) when they come forward to get help. Regions 2 and 5 had these units in the past, but dissolved them when budgets tightened. This function can't be integrated effectively into enforcement-oriented jobs, due to time constraints and the potential for ambiguous messaging. All EPA Regions should have units like this, and measure success in terms of compliance rates and pollutant reduction, not only number of enforcement actions taken and penalties levied.

Lean, Agile, Design Thinking, User Centered Design, User Research, Cloud development.

We should have a leader that does not lie constantly.

My biggest concern as a worker is the time spent on bureaucracy. What I mean by this is that there are too many different reporting systems, too many people working on what appears to be the same thing. I can understand this modus operandi years ago before PCs and the web, but now it just seems to be a system of checks and balances, which ought to be streamlined and trimmed.

I really don't have much to say here as I feel strongly that we already have good working relationships between EPA and states, tribes, local communities and environmental groups and stakeholders. As far as water permits are concerned there is an active & conscious decision to be as transparent as possible in our work product and good use of available technology to reach to a myriad of stakeholders.

I don't have much in the way of comments and productive ideas; perhaps just maintaining an open mind (& purse string) in pursuing all available and changing technology to maintain as much transparency as possible in all the great environmental work being done at EPA! Currently, I firmly believe we reach out as much as possible to all our stakeholders and other parties.

Less bureaucracy and more use of green technology to cut through the muck & stagnation. I believe EPA HQ as well as the regional offices need to "advertise" more of our success stories explaining in simple terms and numbers the strong environmental strides we make year after year. Have media offices proactively searching for the next big "wow story." Get more kids involved in the merits of environmental successes as they will be the stewards of tomorrow's environmental goals and successes.

Dangle a carrot in front of our stakeholders. Come up with ideas for example, giving more aid to communities achieving environmental gains. Working/training state leaders on the importance of change and evolution. EPA already has offices engaged in P2 programs, etc., but what about something as simple as, looking for alternatives to salting our roads in winter, announce a contest - - get ordinary people involved in who we are as an Agency, partnering with future leaders, listening to what the public is telling us & addressing the issues even if the answers are not always the most ideal.

Because we don't typically do much travelling, when we do it's much too complicated to submit a request, and work with CONCUR. It used to be quite easy. However, CONCUR is cumbersome, and results in taking too much time for a trip that could be under 25 miles. Having to submit for Travel when going such short distances and using a government vehicle wastes valuable time and taxpayers money. This is an example of a system that has gotten bogged down by technology rather than made more efficient. I would recommend simplifying this by having an administrative assistant or some other employee trained as the Travel Assistant, and having a simpler system other than CONCUR. Also, I recommend removing the requirement to submit a Travel Authorization for local travel even when using a government vehicle to go to a 2 hour meeting.

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EPA's contract management process is very inefficient (OARM/OAM). The current process for awarding contracts, processing PRs, etc., is lacking resources and could be evaluated for process improvement overall.

Re-evaluating EPA's Action Development Process such that the process for development of regulations and major policies would be much more inclusive of states, tribes, and local communities. I would not recommend being more inclusive of the private sector given the possibility of conflicts of interest.

Modernizing our processes (process improvement) but not doing it in a vacuum either. We need to include our state partners in this effort from the very beginning through the end. May be we can detail state employees into EPA (one or two for each program) to help with this effort.

IT/IM management across the Agency does not exist; therefore, there is a lot of duplication of IT/IM development across the program offices resulting in a significant loss of resources and opportunities. The one problem with trying to realize this opportunity is that OEI does not always know the business needs of EPA program offices which would make it very difficult to achieve this opportunity. Another problem is that program offices are very protective of their turf and are not open to new ways of doing business or collaborating across the Agency.

A much greater investment in IT/IM to modernize existing systems and to streamline existing regulatory requirements (e.g., investing in electronic reporting).

Improvement in video and audio equipment for large meetings. Quite often there are problems with the audio and visual equipment that cause delays in meeting proceedings. Also, a way to mute individuals calling into meetings until or unless there is a need to receive comments or questions from them.

See response to Q #4 above, but adding other federal agencies, states, and commercial vendors to that response (i.e., taking advantage of leveraging resources for IT/IM solutions).

Lack of leadership, knowledge, guidance, and staff throughout OARM, especially HR and contracts management. Decentralized administrative processes at HQ, Also, the the myriad reporting requirements for EEO and diversity efforts which would benefit from economies of scale because they are not really being done in a meaningful way at the program office level though we all spend time and resources talking about it. More generally, the layers upon layers of management for small numbers of staff. The Agency's supervisory ratio is not great and the quasi-supervisory ratio is even worse. Team leaders under Section Chiefs under Branch Chiefs under Deputy Division Directors under Division Directors under Deputy Office Directors under Office Directors.

Partnerships are essential but states, tribes and local communities do not have the resources necessary to implement their programs, financially or experience-wise. Allocating additional funds may help in some instances but, at the practical level, they often rely on our expertise and guidance to help their people stay safe and their business to run efficiently.

engage at all levels of the Agency; staff need to hear the discussions to translate it into the work they do.

hiring/firing but that's a government-wide reform. coordination/consolidation of pieces of programs in the regions and elimination of not statutorily-required programs though those are often the popular ones. Also, less management of work/more management of programs; managers are and are expected to be subject matter experts; not proficient in the ECQs.

federal contracting and budget processes completely inhibit the ability to adopt new technologies or processes because it takes, conservatively, 5 years to begin to put anything into place by which time it's already outdated,

senior political leadership will need to direct this.

there are many really smart and hard-working employees at the Agency. They come here for the mission and to translate their knowledge and skills into something meaningful, They will help if you tap into them, Currently everyone is waiting to be engaged as we await a leadership team and some direction; a complete waste of resources for far too long. Even a video message from the administrator would go a long way towards that. We read his tweets and facebook posts about his engagement with everyone but the Agency he is leading.

Employees should be able to use their POVs and commute to off-site work locations directly from their residences with the standard reimbursement (not reduced millage rates). Commuting to the place of employment only to pickup a GOV and then turn around and drive to another site can be a tremendous waste of time. This is particularly for downtown offices like in Boston where sitting in traffic can be 3 hours of the day coming and going, where if one were to just leave from their suburban place of residence they would have that 3 hours to do actual work. Taking home the GOV is often discouraged, the GOVs are often not available to consecutive days, and it can be a burden to park at residences for many in the Metro area.

my manger discourages me from working on anything outside my assigned area. collaborative projects are discouraged.

Region 1 has a policy of not permitting staff to reserve their own flights or hotels, which usually ends up costing the Agency MORE since travel dept won't make a reservation until they feel it's appropriate--despite reservations being fully refundable! When we delay making reservations the cheaper rates are often taken and the gov rate hotels are booked so we end up paying more for airfare and hotel or stuck staying further away from our travel destination.

google chrome for all! google earth online was also just launched. it is embarrassing that scientists don't have access to these FREE tools commonly utilized by third grade students.

Also, we need access to free file sharing tools, like google drive or dropbox. right now if we have a file larger than 25 mb we rely on 1996 technology: burn the file on a CD and MAIL IT to the person.

computers are SLOW. for engineers and scientists that do more than just email and word with their computer we need faster processors. if I download 300 gb of data and need to process it into a report my computer just fails me. I'm told to go use the computer room, which has limited hours. it's like telling a bunch of carpenters to share one hammer.

We are too program centric. Management keeps voicing for "cross-program" work but then they dole out awards, raises, promotions, new hires by program and everyone is binned by their group.

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There are too many duplicative reporting metrics leading to analysis-paralysis. 50% or more of all reporting metrics should be removed. Reporting on these is a burden for states and requires too many program analysts at EPA. More work, less reporting.

Make and process requests for Travel Comp Time earned via People Plus

Eliminate separate tracking of credit hours earned and used beyond what is already being done in People Plus

Programs that are discretionary function better when utilizing external partners or public-private-partnerships with EPA maintaining the programs through grants. Non-point source grants are a good example of getting targeted pollution control technologies to rural areas. SmartWay is an ideal public-private-partnership which reduces pollution while saving truckers money. Diesel Emission Retrofit (DERA) grants create new technologies and US business niches through grants to private partners. All discretionary programs should be tied to a grant program. Let the locals and industry promote these programs as they are the beneficiaries, and EPA can serve the role of grant management as EPA is extremely effective at grant management, solicitation, and oversight.

Fully staff EPA and let us do our jobs

There is too much confirmation bias in Washington, DC (in both political parties) leading to customer service that is out of touch with local communities. More resources and programs should be focused out of the regional offices where people are more in tune with the public and the regulated community.

Fully staff EPA and let us do our jobs

There seems to be a middle-management bulge at EPA. A lot of this seems to be driven by the need to respond to data requests, Congressional inquiries, and general reporting inquiries. All parties, including Congress and associated lobbyists, need to align to minimize unnecessary duplicative reporting and data requests, so the middle-management bulge can be reduced and EPA staff can focus more on performing the work than on reporting on the work that is performed.

Allow for agency vehicles and car rentals to be parked at employee residences the night prior to early morning travel and to keep them overnight at trip's end if return is impractical.

Remove Trump appointees

1. EPA has the capacity to go to 100% electronic recordkeeping in all programs. This will require rulemakings like the NPDES E-Reporting Rule, but once these are in place, EPA can cut down on office space, cut down on time responding to FOIA requests, and be more transparent. One barrier to this is that the government tends to have low performing electronic management contracts. Larger companies like Oracle or Google could handle these transitions far easier, but rules like SBA and MBE/WBE seem to prevent securing more competent information management contracts.

2. All Regional web sites could be eliminated. It's too confusing for the end-user, and it is not necessary. Efforts to manage the EPA web-site using software or systems out-of-the-box would eliminate the need for multiple expensive content management contracts.

3. Information system staff could be consolidated to reduce redundancies. However, server locations should not be consolidated. The current efforts to consolidate all information servers into Research Triangle Park creates a security risk for the US government in terms of data availability, security, and reliability. These could be decentralized to multiple rural locations and co-located with secure facilities like Army Reserve bases.

Training systems like FAITAS are a good example of how training can be tracked and delivered across multiple agencies through a single platform.

The Brownfields program is a great example of simple and logical reporting metrics linked to a single reporting database (ACRES). This results in accountability, simplicity, reduced costs, and employees focusing on getting work done. Analyze this program and try to replicate how metrics are reported and how outreach is performed.

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The changes in PeoplePlus where employees cannot "take back" their leave requests has created a huge bureaucratic nightmare. With such a challenging workload, it's rare that my leave requests match up with the time I actually take off. Many times, those leave requests need to be amended. But, the new three-step process (ask your supervisory to send it back, fix it, send it off again) is creating a lot of wasted time.

1) EPA has a long standing tradition of being a source of funding to states, tribes, local communities and the private sector for environmental and human health programs and on-the-ground projects. Ensuring that we continue to safeguard and provide this funding, and that we have sufficient staff to oversee the proper use of funding, will help achieve better environmental results. 2) Similarly, EPA has been a source of technical assistance for state and tribal environmental programs and to continue in this role, we must be sufficiently staffed and technically trained, or else a greater burden will fall on our partners. 3) Further, EPA is regarded by many of our state, tribal, local and private partners, and the public as an organization that should always be informed by sound science, and we must be able to operate outside the influences of partisan politics and private interests in order to maintain the trust of these partners and the American public. 4) EPA should have a greater role in educating the public about human health and the environment. While we help fund others with many such efforts, we should have people out in schools and in other venues where we can help inform kids and the general public about the importance of protecting our environment. Reducing our already limited budget and staffing levels and eroding our science-based foundation will only hurt the health of the American people, and jeopardize clean air, water, soil and the general health of our citizens and our environment.

EPA staff and management work hard to provide excellent customer service to states, tribes, local and regulated communities and the public, through funding, oversight, technical assistance, and interaction with the public. We are an organization of highly professional people. Our ability to maintain, and improve excellent customer service depends on being adequately staffed. We must be able to backfill positions with a range of new and experienced personnel, while providing a work environment and culture that retains our most experienced people. Only by having sufficient and experienced staff and management can we adequately implement our statutory obligations and provide the best level of service possible. Further reducing our ranks and funding is completely counter to this goal.

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EPA activities should be based on science and the expertise of those with science and engineering backgrounds.

Requirements, procedures, or processes that politicize the work of EPA prevent us from doing our work efficiently and effectively.

My biggest issue is our IT systems - they don't talk to each other, they are redundant and/or don't work well, they are not streamlined, and they basically take an enormous amount of care and feeding and TIME!

Maintain federal regulations. Having different regulations in each state would be inefficient, result in unequal protection of the environment across the country, result in transboundary pollution from one state to another, and would take our country back to days when rivers caught on fire. Show photos and historic monitoring data to remind people what environmental conditions used to be.

Host a series of training workshops across the country providing overviews of the regulations that seem to be most confusing to the regulated community. Provide Q&A time.

Less top-down micromanagement. If staff are not empowered to make even minor decisions, and/or don't feel that management will support, or worse second-guess, it adds time and inefficiency.

Maintain federal regulations. Having different regulations in each state would be inefficient, result in unequal protection of the environment across the country, result in transboundary pollution from one state to another, and would take our country back to days when rivers caught on fire.

less regulatory uncertainty. no backtracking on previously approved regulations and programs. keep the science advisory board independent and science-oriented - not staffed with industry advocates.

Create an app for citizens to take pictures of environmental violations and submit them directly to our Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assistance. Photos would be time-stamped and geo-coded.

The Office of Policy should be eliminated. EPA should be primarily a science-based agency. Policy review is already provided when EPA products are sent to OMB. Having an Office of Policy biases Agency decision-making away from science-based decisions.

Create an app for citizens to take pictures of environmental violations and submit them directly to our Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assistance. Photos would be time-stamped and geo-coded.

for pete's sake, re-delegate the signing of Superfund Records of Decision back to the regions - the idea that the Administrator should be personally involved in all decisions over-inflates the importance of these documents, as well as will only serve to slow down the process. this is NOT the most important program EPA implements!

The most important administrative change is to get rid of Scott Pruitt. Because he is tied to the fossil fuel industry, and his actions to cozy up to the coal companies rather than to groups that protect the environment, has made my job more difficult, because my partners know that the leadership of my organization is biased, and serves a radical republican, and anti science ideology. The back to basics agenda is also embarrassing. -- it reads like it is from the republican playbook. The recent purge of the science advisory board (not sure of the official title of that board), is also disconcerting. Finally, the staff in the front office in HQ are former staffers of Jim Inhofe, a known climate change denier. The climate change website has been deleted. Because of these reasons, it is hard to take these kinds of surveys seriously because you lack credibility. Thanks.

Requirements for EPA staff to clear any public statements through headquarters are burdensome and unnecessary. Transparency and effective and efficient communication with stakeholders is facilitated by allowing EPA staff to communicate freely and without censorship.

Maintain and request additional funding for EPA programs that support the development and expansion of local, tribal, and state capacity in enforcement and implementation of federal environmental laws. Maintain adequate funding for EPA oversight of programs delegated to the states, which facilitates better national consistency in implementation, permitting, and enforcement, prevents undue political influence from powerful local special interests, and allows states and EPA to partner and share resources. EPA enforcement also allows EPA to fill in enforcement gaps not covered by states, for instance where the generators of the pollution are in one state, while the impacts are felt in another.

Transparency and community outreach are key in communicating EPA's work to stakeholders. EPA should commit to transparency in decision-making and decision-making based on sound science, rule of law. Decisions should always key back to our central mission, protecting human health and the environment. EPA should be better at communicating the economic and public health benefits of our regulations, which have been proven by peer reviewed studies (i.e., <https://www.epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/benefits-and-costs-clean-air-act-1990-2020-second-prospective-study>). Our agency has not done a good enough job touting the vast and multi-faceted economic benefits of our regulations, which has led to the mistaken belief that EPA is a job-killer (even among some members of this administration).

Effective and adequately funded enforcement can reduce costs by increasing compliance; non-compliance in the industry leads to increased costs to the agency from having to respond to accidents, releases, spills, etc. Federal contracting can be slow, costly, and subject to waste; hiring more in-house experts (scientific, economic, and technical) could reduce costs over time.

IT resources and records management should be updated and made more efficient. This would assist in FOIA response and community outreach, which would lead to greater accountability.

Targeted enforcement, for instance in environmental justice communities, can be an effective method for developing partnerships with local communities, municipalities, and state programs while targeting areas most in need of increased enforcement and which bear a disproportionate burden of illegal pollution.

Top law firms and major companies may be helpful to approach to find out best practices for records management and data management, particularly in the era of electronic discovery.

In the spirit of cooperative federalism and engaging our state partners, the Administrator could direct the Regional Administrators to establish an EPA office in each of the 50 states. The goal would be to improve environmental results and customer service by strengthening the symbiotic relationship between the EPA and the states, as coequals. For an example of what this might look like and how it might work, see EPA Region 10 at: <https://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/organization-chart-epas-region-10-office>.

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We have heard of staff being able to work at home more liberally, and with many having a long commute, that alone could help staff be more productive in doing their work. In addition if more folks used teleconference or other means for staff to join in to meetings it would be beneficial as well as productive. Never mind the moral increase. Too many times does management seem to hold face to face mandatory meetings so although it appears they grant WAH they tend to counter it with mandatory in office days.

Standardization of personnel rules for leave, travel, training, awards types of schedules -- as I talk across the agency to peers some seem to have different set of rules to all these items. More equity of them also would be a moral booster. they do not even seem to be the same within each organization.

Travel seems we pay a lot for fees for travel, the agency should promote that calling the travel center should be rare and for complicated/emergency travel, and at the least run reports by NPM/Region to see who uses it less and look at their best practices.

As we revamp to be more effective, efficient and accountable make sure the right people are invited to the table, and the changes are communicated well and in advance to what is changing and why it is changing. Seems like decisions to make change are just made, and they are made from one point of view and no checking to see what business processes may be broken or another tool/process to replace those processes are not considered. Upcoming change to PPL that folks are hearing a little about but not a lot of what/how/when and what all the changes of processes will be for leave reporting, and more importantly that I (and the rest of the agency get paid timely.

Cooperation from all (the key to efficiency and effectiveness) and trust from management (do away with favoritism)

Continue to provide best service(s) we can

Communication - being truthful re loss of \$\$\$ due to budget cuts

continue to work on ensuring processes are on line, we have single sign and/or we do not have what seems like a thousand passwords to remember. that alone times all the staff could save time.

promoting better go green within epa for recycling and education of the staff of how and what they can compost vs trash or recycle

I think EPA is up to date (as far as I know) on all new technology.

We should transfer as many of the financial, HR responsibilities out of the Agency as possible and redirect staff to work on the actual mission of the agency as possible. This does not meaning replacing but retraining, educating where possible. Contract out for facility, transit, travel, payroll, and as many administrative processes as possible, and/or centralize so at least that provides as much equity on how we do things across the agency. Look for who does it well and gain their best practices.

more communication and working together between divisions and sharing information

Region 1, 7, 8, ORD centralization of travel prep.

De centralized financial processing of R 1, 2, 3 and 7, they can do more of the work with less staff, vs pushing the financial/budget/personnel processes out to each of their divisions. Saving staff and time, and ensuring processes are done correct, efficiently and in many cases at a savings.

PROCUREMENT PROCESS and requirements for 7 sign offs prior to making the purchase. Could never understand why if I see an item for \$35 I need to go through a very long draw out process of approvals and research to purchase the product for \$132. This obviously doesn't include the time of high paid employees that need to sign off.

TRAVEL PROCESS - "It's the Law" Why do we have to select from a list of low budget hotels that a service decides are best when we can call ourselves and get the govt. rate for the hotel we prefer. Why can't we get a flat rate and pay the difference out of our pockets? By the time you pay all the people to get involved and the fees to the service, you have paid double for the cheap motel.

Partnership, Partnerships, Partnerships. Be visible, don't just sit at your desk and bark orders at your partners in projects. Get out there and show the communities that you are working with them and not here to punish them. They are more responsive and do not dread seeing or hearing from you. I have seen some grantees that have had their grant for two years and still have not met their Project Officer.

If you make it a point to include the state/tribes/historic preservation early on in the process, not only do they feel they are partners but cut some slack to the end users as they feel there are several sets of eyes that are all in agreement.

Involve them in the process. Listen to their ideas and compromise to make everyone comfortable with government.

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The only requirement/procedure/process I have encountered at EPA that seemed like an unnecessary use of time were the Federal Acquisition Institute online trainings in the FAITAS system that were required to maintain certification as a Contract Order Representative (COR). Several specific on-line trainings were required and they were generally not applicable to the type of work I would do as a COR.

Partnering with states, tribes, communities and the private sector has always been critical to achieving environmental results in my work. To sustain and continually enhance those partnerships, both EPA and states depend on having adequate staff and resources for successful collaboration. It takes considerable time and sometimes travel to develop and continually improve these partnerships. If staff is overly stretched and does not have adequate resources, these partnerships are likely to suffer.

Excellence in customer service and keen awareness that every customer we deal with is a tax-payer has been of utmost importance to me in my role at EPA and is something I strive to enhance every moment of every day. To continue this high level of excellence, it is critical to have adequate staff and resources to perform proactive outreach and timely, thorough response.

Environmental Management System (EMS)

Need to reduce the paper burden and internal process documentation and audit requirements imposed on EPA office building locations to maintain EMS programs current and up-to-date at each office building location.. To do the EMS properly as currently set forth, requires more resources than we have and I /we don't think the return on the investment is worth the additional time in EPA's office building locations where the primary activity that takes place by the workers is to sit at a computer or desk for most of the day. It makes some sense to have EMS programs at our laboratories where chemicals are used/stored but much less so at office buildings where we're a tenant and have pretty much maxed out our greening capabilities yet have to invest a considerable amount of time maintaining an EMS up to date with extremely little benefit. HQ might develop a single EMS with annual program expectations for office building locations and administer the EMS program centrally from HQ to save resources, time, and improve efficiency. Alternatively, HQ could back off on the EMS expectations, requiring audits less frequently and backing off the frequency (which at present is annually) with which one has to review the 13 (or thereabouts) elements of the EMS.

Continuing to improve our computer and information system technologies will continue to make our work more efficient and effective and enhance opportunities to work remotely.

Continuing to improve our computer and information system technologies will continue to make our work more efficient and effective and enhance opportunities to work remotely.

Any program I have ever worked in at EPA has always needed to focus on continual resource sharing and optimization with states and federal agencies.

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508 Compliance - I understand the importance, but you practically need a law degree to understand this rule when trying to purchase any equipment. Here is an example of what I mean, when following "directions" on how to process 508 compliance documentation for purchase I got the following response that requires my follow-up: the vendor???'s VPAT only addresses 1194.21 and 1194.31 I will need something from you not only saying that you ???have conducted product research???' but that you have conducted product research and either 2.b, 2.c, or 2.d apply - There is no explanation of what product research. Lets streamline this nonsense.

Providing solutions rather than litigation, if we could work with rather than litigate against - that would be the best scenario. For instance I've seen EPA requiring NPDES permittees, especially WWTP - (towns) to analyze for a large list of pharmaceuticals and endocrine disrupting compounds in their effluent, at great cost to the cash strapped communities. EPA should have a national policy on what the requirements are for NPDES permits, and not require hugely expensive "research" analysis at the whim of a single permit writer.

Having these groups networking with the EPA regional headquarters and EPA regional labs, we have had great success with this, and the states really feel we are partners - this should expand out to tribes and especially the communities that may feel our only purpose is to enforce.. I know personally that many states highly respect the work we do and rely upon our expertise and our scientists to help solve problems and collaborate in times of need.

I think every dollar spent at EPA is in investment that pays off exponentially in savings with human healthcare, environmental cleanup, and long term litigation. Better to spend the money now and prevent spending more in the future.

I believe our procurement process...at least in the Region 3 area...is overly restrictive and inefficient, especially for items that are under the \$3500 dollar amount. But, this is true for many of the higher cost items that involve support contracts. We have wasted much money including many staff hours trying to meet the overwhelming number of requirements (or perceived requirements!) for purchasing. I believe the first way to fix this, is to give the purchasing staff more training and the incentive to help those of us who are trying to purchase something which we need for performing our jobs. The purchasing staff should have the attitude that we are their customers and that they should be helping us obtain the right items in the most efficient manner. But, this can't happen if the procurement staff is understaffed and under pressure. I hear more complaints about the ability to purchase an item in an efficient manner, than most anything else. Improving this area would improve our organization overall. Thank you for listening.

The technologies that have the most promise in this regard rely on capturing and storing environmental monitoring data. Region 4 Superfund program is requiring environmental monitoring data to be submitted to the region to enter into an EQUIS database. The data can be evaluated in a number of software platforms such as ArcGIS or by EnviroInsite. I just took training in EnviroInsite. It is powerful to be able to evaluate trends in data and identify samples exceeding a standard. Graphical presentation of data and other features available once data is electronically available eliminate ambiguity in interpretation of environmental data and eliminate some of the back and forth between EPA and responsible parties. EPA recently added to its ProUCL statistical free software a trend analysis module that has been very helpful in review of time trends for concentrations in groundwater monitoring wells or in surface water. It eliminates arguing about data with responsible parties. EnviroInsite can do trend analysis on multiple monitoring wells at once. I am not recommending a particular product. However, the concept of data management and tools to evaluate data will modernize EPA. I propose moving away from hard copy reports to living data with public accessibility.

Management puts too much emphasis on fluff work like developing databases that no one will ever use. They send multiple people to events or meetings when just sending 1 person with the knowledge to answer questions and represent the Agency is all that is required. The lack of management's ability to make decisions and trying to get consensus on everything is a real detriment. Managers who ask for work updates to spend time reporting on work that does not change from week to week so they just want to get face time with senior management.

We need to do more cost benefit analysis on what we do. For example in lieu of giving out money for projects it might be more cost effective for us to provide the equipment for a project via an in-kind grant. Also this is a questions we should be asking our partners. What can we do to help them and at a minimum explaining why we may not be able to meet their needs.

None at this time.

One way is to reduce the manager to employee ratio. I work in an office that has one GS15 supervising 11 people, Of those 11 people the work could be performed by 7 people. At DOD for what my manager does this would be a GS13 position. Some branches could be combined such as grants and contracts, however if this was done they would want to GS 14s to manage each area which would defeat the purpose. Far too many at this Agency want to build empires and do not really care about improving how the mission is accomplished in a cost efficient manner. Awards are given out just to give awards. The employee review system is ineffective. Managers will not give someone a bad rating because they might actually have to spend time documenting the employee (of course that is if the manager understood our work). They ensure their favorites get plum assignments so they can write them up for awards. In my Region, I would say that more leadership with business and financial decision making capabilities is needed to much emphasis is put on making everyone happy and not necessarily on getting the work done in an effective manner.

The EAS and Compass systems are constantly having problems. Furthermore if I actually utilized the EAS contracting system as I am supposed to it would more than double the amount of time it takes me to get work done. Currently with technology as it is I can and do most of my work for my customers independent of my manager. In fact I have very little interaction with him other than his morning stop by to see if I am at my desk, or his emails to see what I am working on because he wants to meet with his supervisor to tell him what we are working on. Outside of some level above review regulatory requirements I could be more aligned with my customers and that would be 1 GS15 less coming out of my tax dollars.

Currently the Emergency Response Program appears to be aligned perfectly with our partners and works closely with them. One thing that might be considered is allowing for more flexibility in realigning activities to address priorities. If a certain pollutant is identified bring together a strike team to address the issue who will work closely with the states or other federal Agencies.

Specifically no however there are many good corporate practices that could be brought to the Government side. As stated above more long term cost benefit analysis needs to be performed which if done correctly will allow us to make more cost effective decision for the future. Certainly senior managers need to hold the managers more accountable, and the managers need to hold the employees more accountable. One easy way to reduce cost is to reduce the number of managers. This Agency is top heavy in GS 15s and SES. There is no reason that the Regions should have SES positions heading each division. I have not seen this at other Agencies I have worked at. The other Agencies I worked at had a minimum of 65 employees under them, and the 14s supervised a minimum of 16 to 25 people.

Provide a few work stations for State and Tribal counterparts to work in EPA's office. This has worked well in the past with MassDEP in the NPDES program. The state or tribal counterpart works one or more days each month in the EPA work station. This provides ready access for in person communication. Coordination between federal/state programs is timely and collegial. I can not overstate the improved cooperation that comes from personal interaction. Conflicts with faceless bureaucrats are replaced with cooperation between respected partners.

Do away with generic answering machine greetings such as "I am on the phone or away from my desk." Such greetings are worthless. Replace with; Hi this is***, and this is the week of May 8th and I will be in the office Monday through Thursday." This gives the caller a reasonable expectation as to when the staff person may hear their message. The generic greeting leaves the caller to wonder if the staff person is on the phone or on sabbatical.

When I first started with EPA, we simply turned in receipts for tolls and parking and were reimbursed in cash. When you add up all the staff time an expense it takes to process an expense voucher for local travel, the cost of the process itself is far exceeds the reimbursement.

For expenses under \$100, the Region might limit approvals to the first line supervisor. A combination of random audits and flagged audits for requests that are too frequent or appear odd will keep the system honest. It is not cost effective to micromanage every tiny expense.

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Developing/Updating pre- approved letters, brochures, outreach materials. If the document had already been pre-approved, then there is no longer a need to re-review the materials. Provide an approval number with a sunset date.
EPAR1-10-01-2017-EXP-10-01-2020.

1- Develop Consortiums, 2- Develop MOA's to streamline common practices, 3- Develop Common criteria for EJ mapping criteria,

1- Assign # CSN's - Customer Service Number - EPAR1-10-01-2017-12:34PM-jmb- T-MADLS. which Id's when the call came in & who handled it and if it was transferred to a state department.

I see individual contractors and fellows, especially recent graduates, as a greatly untapped source of potential. Although these workers bring fresh perspectives and knowledge of new technologies, many of them feel under appreciated and feel that there is no room for growth within the organization. The lack of pathways to permanent jobs from contracts and fellowships creates high turnover, draining the agency of valuable knowledge from highly skilled workers. The high turnover is also very inefficient because the agency has to repeatedly train workers to do the same job every few years.

In summary, I believe that if better pathways to permanent positions were created, the agency would:

1. Have more motivated and productive contractors and fellows
2. Have less turnover costs
3. Have more efficiency and better quality products
4. Have an influx of fresh ideas and a reduction of the stagnancy that exists in some parts of the organization

Develop an algorithmic web site that will ask a series of rated questions to provide a estimated environmental health risk value

Generic Coupons by sector.

Giving employees individual credit for ideas they come up with. Allowing them to be part of making it happen. A great idea is the hard part, the easier part is implementation, but the credit goes to those that implement the idea.

The Office of Planning, Analysis and Accountability within the Office of the Chief Financial Officer creates an exaggerated reporting burden that goes beyond what is required by the Government Performance and Results Act and OMB. Their impact is agency-wide in that all program and regional offices have to respond to their burdensome requests in some capacity. Their processes such as the annual performance plan and strategic reviews could be streamlined to focus on core requirements to abide by the law and OMB. They also have an excessive amount of staff that review and comment on each requested product that results in multiple back and forth between programs and OPAA - this not only impacts program staff assigned with responding but also within programs who are the subject matter experts whose primary duties are not on these initiatives. The agency should take a hard look at OPAA and their processes to allow the agency to better use their limited resources on our core work rather than excessive administrative assignments that are beyond what is necessary.

Determine a streamlined way to make our SharePoint sites accessible to the public to increase transparency and collaboration. Currently, the process requires a public user to have a Microsoft account and then request access which has to be approved. This limits the accessibility and collaboration on various environmental products.

Same answer as #1.

OECA's Supplemental Environmental Projects (SEP) policy is arduous, difficult and limits opportunity. The SEP policy would benefit from simplification. It is difficult for industry to understand.

We used to have a program called Project XL which sought to revise regulation. This method could be used to revise certain RCRA and water regulations involving industrial sectors and categories, sometimes the chemical pollutants identified were those from the seventies and eighties, but currently these sectors no longer use these pollutants (unfortunately sometimes worse but unregulated chemical pollutants are now being used). Revisit chemical pollutants used in industrial sectors.

Frankly, I think we do a great job at this.

. I think one of the most inefficient aspects of working at the EPA, when compared to the private sector are all the regulations that congress imposes on the federal workforce. There are significantly more bureaucratic hoops to jump through for any aspect of government work, and it appears congress imposes these "hoops". However, I think that many are necessary to assure that government employees meet ethical requirements, maintain proper records, and assure that we do the work of the public.

Laptops, I-pads and cell phones in the field for inspectors - with clear helpful guidance (from OGC) on electronic records developed during an inspection.

Electronics during inspections - some people still use carbon paper. Mandatory inspector electronics and software training (in person not that crap training on the computer).

The hiring system should be revamped so that we can get the best and brightest staff possible. One critical component to this would be to allow hiring managers to review all applications, rather than having the shared service center screen them.

States rely on EPA's national recommended water quality criteria which are published pursuant to Section 304(a) of the Clean Water Act. Unfortunately, many of the 304(a) criteria for protection of aquatic life are out of date, especially for metals. For example, the lead criteria were last updated in 1984. Unfortunately the branch in the Office of Water that works on 304(a) criteria is very small and woefully understaffed. EPA should expand this program and prioritize updating the national recommended water quality criteria, especially the aquatic life criteria for metals. In some cases the criteria may become less stringent and in some cases they would be more stringent, but at least they would be based on the latest available science.

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Modernize or eliminate the awards program. The awards take so long to process that people are awarded for projects they finished more than a year ago. Also, people who are most diligently doing their work, but not on glamorous workgroups tend to be overlooked while people who had a minor role in a workgroup get awards. Many people perceive the system as unfair. It is nice to recognize staff, but the cash awards are not really necessary, and do not seem to provide any incentive to work harder or better. The money would be better spent and more appreciated if it were invested in technical training.

1. The IT department should offer training on Microsoft Access. We now have it on our computers, but there is no training available for it.
2. In this day and age all managers should have EPA cell phones so that they can easily access Microsoft Outlook while on the go. That is not the case in the region that I work in.

We are currently working very closely with our states and are constantly trying to enhance our relationship with our state partners in the region that I work in.

We should invest more in technical/scientific training. If we are to have a smaller staff, they should be as knowledgeable as possible. They should be able to attend conferences and take courses if it will increase their expertise. Webinars are helpful, but not an adequate substitute for in-person learning and networking.

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Management MUST start allocating all (or even most) of the funding (contract funds) they receive at the start of the fiscal year.

Now and for the last several years management does not really know the level of contract funds they will actually receive each year. So large pools of money are withheld/kept in reserve - again, usually 6 months or more - just in case something comes up or is changed by upper management.

The "reserved" funds are not committed/spent on projects until another fear/concern kicks in - that if all funding is not allocated/committed by the end of the fiscal year, next year upper management will see the surplus and reduces the level of funding allocated.

This often - regularly - means that new and on-going projects/work is put on hold for at least 6 month. Then 6 months into the fiscal year money is suddenly allocated, but only 6 months worth. The kicker is that since upper management does not know (or does not want to know) of the delay they still expects a years worth of progress.

Now since the normal project "maintenance" has been delayed for 6 months, what were little problems, errors, etc. are now larger, much more complex, and much more expensive to address. In addition, by now (ie., 6 months later) individuals that would normally would have be working on the project have to re-acclimate themselves to the details of the project.

The final result of the delay in the allocation of annual funding is that less progress/work gets done for the same amount of money and, more importantly, a workforce that is extremely frustrated (with all of the health issues that includes).

Achieving better environmental results from any partner is really straight forward. EPA needs to work with the partner (this time I'm not including the private sector) by first allocating funds to assist the partner in beginning and continuing the work on a project. Almost all Local/State governments are low on money. I think they WANT to do the stated environmental project but other local issues - roads, infrastructure, etc. - have priority.

Secondly, management must make sure and make it a priority that the needed EPA employees are available, have the time, and get buy in from their supervisor to work with the partner (again, I'm not including the private sector here).

Just like #2:

Provide and encourage the people to do the job, make sure that management cooperates, and of course, supplies the necessary level of funding.

Correct the inefficiencies discussed in Question 1 is a start.

Secondly, ALL levels of management must understand and accept that some of EPA's goals cannot be achieved on a short time scale. Cleaning up an area is good but if the source of the problem is not addressed what good does is cleaning up that area. The problem you "corrected" just reoccurs.

Accepting that some goals can only be addressed from a long-term viewpoint AND allocating the budget and manpower in this manner will, again in the long-term, reduce costs and inefficiencies at EPA, while maintaining environmental protection for all Americans.

Sorry, answering 1-4 took it all out of me. Parts of those answers/suggestions would probably address this issue/question, too.

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Shared service centers - While expected to save \$ and be more efficient they are not. In hiring alone, we are having to revise and re-submit items repeatedly. There is no standard in which they work from and the standards change depending on who is looking at your submittal. Delays have resulted in not being able to bring on new hires in a timely manner. Bring HR back to the regions or at least allow the Regions HR staff to get involved and assist when the shared service centers are backlogged.

Sufficient management tools do not exist to efficiently track and manage work products. Invest in tools that Regional managers need since Regional employees are the ones enforcing regulations and are the boots on the ground. Our work products are not the same as HQ.

EPA should have a significant oversight role but also a consultation role with our partners. Unfortunately Regions do not have the staffing necessary to perform these tasks. The key to better environmental results is improving the quality of oversight and being able to provide our states with consultation services (legal, technical, lab services etc.) This would require staffing and database systems that are easy to use and add value, not create more work and track metrics for the sake of tracking metrics that are not used for any purpose.

Increase Regional staffing levels to be able to properly assist, advise and support states, tribes and local communities. Provide databases that can be linked that are easy to use and capture valuable information, not just metrics for bean counting.

EPA is far behind in technology and we need systems to manage the needs of our customers and for sharing information.

Following databases that cause more work for us and our partners than produce efficiency - CEDRI, TMS, WQX.

Yes. Standardizing procedures and processes between HQ Offices and Regions. Provide systems that communicate. We should not have to send in word documents and spreadsheets to report numbers to HQ-OEI QA

Database for audits and inspections that can generate the reports and track findings, violations and corrective actions. Again it has to be easy to use and of value when designing such a system.

Absolutely see all comments above.

I don't think we need to necessarily realign activities. Possibly realign at a higher program level. Example-NOAA has a Marine Debris Program, EPA should support NOAA activities and not re-create what is being done by NOAA. We should be asking NOAA what they need from us to help and provide or collect the data they need.

The biggest administrative requirement keeping us from doing our job efficiently is the executive order which has severely limited creating new regulations. While we understand the impetus for this, it also adds another layer of bureaucracy which makes it difficult to produce regulations that could potentially be useful. Unfortunately, there's no easy fix for this from the EPA standpoint.

On the EPA level, the biggest hindrance to efficiency is the lack of political appointees present as well as huge lack of communication between the present political appointees and the career staff. This is particularly preventing my organization from communicating our work to the highest levels and this is fundamental work that LITERALLY prevents radiation from affecting individuals, tribes, and states. Having no means to reach the upper management means we don't have advocates helping us allocate resources. This also means we go by unnoticed and it becomes more difficult to provide proper public outreach.

EPA currently has good procedures in place to work with stakeholders and the public and to get their input in crafting regulations and guidance via public comments sections and town halls. However, because many of the work we do will affect people on the local level, it might be useful to emphasize more site visits and public forums at the local level.

EPA already has many methods in place to do this. However, we could provide more avenues for public outreach by having phone lines available for public comment to be recorded. This could also mean expanding EPA's partnerships with other federal agencies working on local projects and better coordination with Congress especially with representatives and senators whose districts our work will apply to. It could also mean better coordination with municipalities by finding liasons and having them have direct contact with the EPA. This could also mean expanding our use of social media.

The biggest untapped potential at EPA are the employees, their talent, and experience. The best way to improve costs and to find new innovative ways to perform our jobs is to foster avenues for the various offices to collaborate ??? even down to the branch level. Scientists in one office for example, may benefit from the experience and expertise of scientists in another office and come up with innovative and cost effective solutions to approaching an environmental issue. They may also help each other understand how to solve problems or interpret data. This could come in the form of more seminars, groups, professional development, lunch and learns, talent hub, or agency-wide events. Collaboration may also help us cut down costs of contractors.

EPA could try to use social media more aggressively and make itself a bigger presence on Twitter, Facebook, snapchat, news outlets, and other pages. Because so many of our programs are voluntary, more than anything else, communication is one of the most important tools.

Encourage professional development among employees, especially for government conferences where other agencies are present. EPA can also host meetings and our own conferences to encourage more partnering with other agencies ??? the incident command system course is one very successful model for how EPA has coordinated with other agencies.

Many of the procedures we have in place are based on years and years and years of figuring out how to stay accountable, maintain stakeholder communication, delegate our work to the states, and still enforce our ability to protect human health and the environment. I encourage political appointees to have real conversations with the employees to see just how they have learned to do their work with the limited resources available.

One best practice being from my organization is the use of the available cloud systems available ??? One Drive and Sharepoint. It would be great to continue encouraging this and finding new ways to take advantage of cloud-based systems with other federal agencies as well.

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OLEM National Remedy Review Board (NRRB) review process for all Superfund remedies >\$25M is time consuming and costly (every Region travels 2 x per year + put together extensive documents). NRRB was originally initiated to ensure remedies were cost effective. They used to track \$ saved. Over the years due to membership turnover the charge changed and resulted in the NRRB second guessing Regional decisions which in turn caused additional work (more sampling, additional contingencies on the remedies) thus increasing the cost and burden. The Board should either be dismantled or changed to only Ad Hoc membership with specific real life expertise on the proposed cleanup remedy. Membership is 1 rep per Region, OGC rep, OECA rep, OLEM reps.

Sunset any OSWER Directives older than the year 2000. Most are outdated. There are at least several hundred directives.

Unwritten policy on NOT using Drones. Drones should be used in limited circumstances such as emergency responses to assess situations quickly and effectively. Currently, the On Scene Coordinator and other responders drive or walk to get an idea of the magnitude of the situation being addressed. Can be used to save staff resources for environmental monitoring.

Records management: EPA has developed its own records schedule versus using the NARA records schedule (as is used by all other Feds). They should do a cross-walk with NARA to ensure compliance and updates as NARA updates their schedules.

EPA should have a system to store records electronically. This is the preferred method per the NARA guidelines. EPA spends millions yearly storing paper records at the National Archives. Average per box storage costs are about \$52.00 per month. In addition, storage of paper records requires file room/records center space in EPA facilities. To reduce the Federal Footprint per the 2016 Federal Asset Sale and Transfer Act, EPA should transition to electronic (only) records storage to save on leased space requirements.

We need to utilize the EPASS (PIV)cards for electronic signature. This would allow the signing of documents electronically and storage of those records electronically. EPA needs to consult with other Federal Agencies that already utilize the PIV cards for electronic signature vs reinventing the wheel.

Restrictions on addressing climate change prevent us from protecting the economy and the environment. This can be addressed by having senior leaders listen to and take into account independent scientific consensus instead of relying on bias fossil fuel industry interests.

Work with the states up front to set priorities and divide the workload since the States/Tribes do not have sufficient resources. The more complex work should be completed by the EPA in partnership with the States/Tribes since they don't have the technology or resources necessary to accomplish the work. Use agency Performance Partnership Agreements/Grants to document the division of labor between states and EPA.

Consult with OGC and OECA since they are hesitant to try anything that's new or different. We should pilot new approaches to determine if the outcomes are acceptable.

Reviving scientific input into decision making that is independent of fossil fuel and business interests. The mission of the EPA is not to protect business, but to protect the environment in scientifically supported ways.

Allow the Regions to work with the customers to try new approaches. As noted above, any new approaches are typically frowned upon the EPA Headquarters. The communities that are served by the Regions are all very different and one size fits all does not work.

There's too much HQ overhead directing the work versus workers doing the work. A lot of HQ staff that oversee the work have no direct experience in that arena and often have misconceptions on how communities, industry, states and tribes interact.

Allow the Regional enforcement programs to conduct compliance assistance visits as was done during the Bush Administration. Program staff preferred this method versus the one size fits all approach. Regions used to do outreach to industry when a new regulation was promulgated to ensure clear understanding of the expectations prior to pursuing enforcement.

Before HQ Regulation writers develop a new regulation, they should consult with staff (Regions, States, Tribes) that will enforce or oversee the regulation to ensure that it's understandable, implementable, and enforceable. If you need a guidance document to explain interpretation of a regulation then it was poorly crafted.

States/Tribes/communities need more assistance from EPA on high priority high health risk programs (e.g, Asbestos NESHAP, RCRA Underground Storage Tanks, Safe Drinking Water Act Underground injection program, TSCA PSBs, TSCA Lead (lead paint), TSCA new rules.). Regional, ORD and HQ resources should be directed towards those programs so that the Agency can better support our partners. However, these high impact programs receive the lowest FTE allocation and funding.

Letting states, tribes and local communities move forward on any regulations they wish to enact that are stronger than federal standards and regulations. Senior managers may have to cut regulations in the new "back to basics" agenda, but states should not be prevented from keeping or enacting more stringent standards. That is current law. "New federalism" cuts both ways - some states want stronger state rules. They should not be prevented from doing so.

OEM should dis-invest in PHILIS (mobile lab for chemical warfare agents (CWA)). DOD has that capability and it falls under their jurisdiction. OEM spends about \$3M/per year maintaining it.

DOD had funded 4 Regional Labs to develop the capability to analyze for CWA. Maintaining the structures and equipment for that capability is expensive and has never been used. Maintenance has not been paid for by DOD. Any equipment should be released to DOD since that work falls under their jurisdiction.

Make sure that ORD research supports the regulatory and cleanup programs. They should work hand in hand with the programs to focus their research. ORD should focus more on analytical methods development for new and emerging contaminants since industry has not set those standards. They should work with the States/Tribes to see what their needs are and develop a plan with deadlines to accomplish those tasks. Their post-docs are not directed toward research associated with Agency priorities, they are allowed to conduct any type of research that they???re interested in.

Provide more training for the HQ HR Service Center Staff and always add language to the announcements so that lists can be shared across HQ, Regions, versus advertising one by one (very inefficient). This centralized approach to human resource management has not been as successful as was contemplated when the concept was invoked. Many mistakes occur when producing cert lists. Everyone has problems getting lists with new hires that meet the requirements of the job. For example, if you???re trying to hire a chemist you often get a list that has biologists that took one chemistry class, etc. We need to hire the right skillset.

The key part of this question is "while maintaining environmental protection" for all Americans." If costs and inefficiencies are reduced but at the same time reduce environmental protections, then they should not be implemented.

The Agency time keeping system People Plus (PPL) needs to be updated to allow entry of time at the beginning of the day and end (so it calculates credit leave); allow request for telework (same as request for leave); include credit leave in the leave category. Currently each Region and HQ program have at least 3 systems to track time & attendance (1. PPL, 2. Lotus Notes, 3. Daily Flex Schedule tracker, 4. Email to manager requesting Telework). When leave is approved by the supervisor, the leave is not reflected in the system for weeks. Since the Current PPL system requires that Agency staff put in their time for the pay period by the 2ns Thurs and managers approve by Friday ??? this causes allot of rework and amendments if the employee took unanticipated leave that Friday. The Agency???'s pay date is Tuesday so the system should have employees complete their time card on Friday at the end of the pay period and managers approve the following Monday.

For Records Management, use the NARA Records Schedule (all other Feds use it). EPA developed their own. EPA could merely do a cross-walk per statute to ensure that Agency Records are filed and retained in accordance with the NARA guidelines. Also require electronic storage of records so save space and have easier access to documents.

Electronic Signatures need to be utilized to save resources. This Agency generates and spends millions of dollars on paper document storage at the NARA archives. Being able to electronically sign and store documents would save resources and be good for the environment (less paper usage).

Transition WebForms to SharePoint for the electronic processing of Administrative forms. The transition has been planned since 2015 but never initiated or completed.

Allow the use of Tablets. They are much cheaper than laptops. EPA only allows the purchase of the Dell Venue Pro tablet to have direct access to the network. Other options should be included. It???'s an unfair competitive advantage that all of EPA???'s laptops are restricted to Dell versus other vendors.

The EAS procurement system is outdated and time consuming. A contracts manager formerly employed at the VA commented that it takes them 2 days at EPA to input contracts language into the system versus 30 minutes at the VA. Alternative energy technologies should be promoted and given tax credits to reduce both air and water pollution. EnergyStar and similar programs should be promoted more strongly. These kinds of programs increase the efficient use of resources.

Develop a joint strategic plan that clearly outlines each Agencies area of focus, measurements and targets each fiscal year. Can also establish MOUs outlining priorities, how to conduct coordination etc.

Performance based contracting for Remedial Actions has been utilized and has reduced costs. Very resource intensive in setting up the plans and specs, holding pre-bid conferences for vendors, reviewing the bids, setting up evaluation criteria, conducting oversight of the contractor. Would require investment/re-training of contracting officers and site construction managers (foreman) to oversee the construction activities. Oversight is needed to ensure that the work is properly conducted per the specs and that the contractor does not cut corners.

Centralized time-keeping. Currently Office Managers (secretaries) spend about 25-30% of their time doing much lower graded work such as time-keeping. Centralizing the function and hiring staff at the GS 5/6 level saves salary \$, provides consistency, ensures compliance of the rules since they are required to be experts in that area, and allows higher graded secretaries to perform the higher graded work.

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We should decrease the number of political appointees and build a trusted connection between career and political staff. We need to decrease the number of political staff because the Agency is relatively small, the learning curve for efficiently running a Federal agency is steep, and appointing individuals (senate confirmed or not) is extremely long. Vacant political appointments prevent two way communications from occurring. Career employees can help when they are at the table.

There is too much consultation required with headquarters to get things done in a timely manner in Superfund. Also, headquarters staff do not always respect "team" deadlines which further slows down the process.

1. EPA is a public health agency and our first concern should be to protect people and their environments. Every person, regardless of where they live, should have the same minimum guarantee to that protection. EPA's minimum standards should be based on high quality objective science, not [state or Federal] political influence. 2. States (local and tribal governments) should have the flexibility to increase the degree of protection but not to lower it. States should have the flexibility to achieve minimum protections in different ways, as long as those methods are determined to be effective. 3. Resources should be provided to governments in a directed manner to achieve specific results. Block grants that can be redirected from their primary purpose should be avoided. 4. Technical assistance should be available to the states upon request. 5. EPA should work with its partners to establish by consensus the 10 greatest preventable public health and environmental hazards and establish strategic and tactical plans for addressing them.

The state and regional offices work well together on Superfund issues.

1) Technical assistance upon request for urgent and chronic problems. 2) Two way staff exchanges - EPA staff rotating through state, tribes, community, and the regulated community and vice versa. Coordinated rotations should be for no less than 30 days, with specific assignments, and stated objectives. Incentives for participation need to be established. 3) EPA should establish a not-for-profit foundation to identify and distribute non-appropriated resources to states, tribes, communities, and the regulated community to address qualified emergency, urgent, and chronic problems impacting people's health and the environment. Note that the CDC Foundation raised millions of dollars through the Gates and Zuckerman foundations to support West Africa during the Ebola Outbreak. An EPA foundation could do something similar without relying on congressional support.

Having less internal process from headquarters.

EPA needs to validate its programs and goals with solid impact metrics and timelines that have milestones.

EPA's innovation team is promoting challenges, prizes and citizen science as tools to rapidly identify and advance new technologies while leveraging Federal agencies, the regulated community, NGO's, and foundations.

1. EPA's innovation team is promoting challenges, prizes and citizen science as tools to rapidly identify and advance new technologies while leveraging Federal agencies, the regulated community, NGO's, and foundations. 2. The CDC Foundation is a best practice that has been highly successful at extending the capability of CDC to promote public health.

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Streamline the levels of review. Way back, the ratio of "producers" to reviewers/admin folks was around 70/30. Today that relationship has reversed. Some review of work is obviously necessary but too many levels now exist. The tendency with each level is to find something to add/change/delete that in effect justifies that particular level of review.

Management in Region 5 especially the Air Division does not treat staff with respect. Some managers yell at their employees and bully them. This behavior is unacceptable and should not be tolerated. Having a supervisor insult their staff creates a hostile work environment and prevents people from being happy at work and doing their best. Oftentimes these issues are brought to upper management and the behavior never stops. It is just "swept under the rug."

Since the states are in the forefront of implementing the nation's environmental laws through delegation, primacy or outright statutory authority, EPA should more aggressively engage them early on the development of major policy/rules/ legislative initiatives. Standing committees of state officials in the several media might help. States are co-regulators so this action should not trigger the FACA. We might also just simply ask them.

Some managers oversee a staff of 3-4 people. This is inefficient and a waste of tax payers money. A supervisor should have a section of 10+ people. Perhaps getting rid of some supervisors and having them work as staff would be a better use of resources.

There are such opportunities. For example, the administration has placed a strong emphasis on building infrastructure. In EPA's world that affects most significantly the several environmental finance programs in OW. To coordinate their activities, targeting them to priorities, and to improve personnel utilization and introduce more efficient work flow processes, suggest considering the creation of an Office of Environmental Infrastructure Finance. This would include at least, the two SRF programs, which should be merged in any case, and WIFIA.

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The contracting process makes it extremely hard to efficiently procure outside services such that there is a general feeling that it's not worth pursuing. I recognize laws are in place to ensure funds are not funneled to favored contractors, but the outcome of the current model is 1) many EPA employees are needed to oversee and implement contracting processes and oversee the overseers, 2) EPA contracts are only won by the mega-contractors with layers of federal project managers (\$\$) between the EPA employee that needs help and the actual doer at the firm, and 3) the assistance is often not of great quality because the emphasis is on process not purpose. What would I do? Evaluate the process and eliminate inefficiencies, layers, and steps while ensuring compliance with statute, but provide the ability for EPA folks to acquire outside assistance when needed without the layers of cost and tremendous time/paperwork investment. It would be tedious and unglamorous work to untangle, understand, and fix this morass, but it sure would be helpful.

Organize 50 state "desks" integrating reps from each HQ program and ORD, regional liaison/ops staff to assess baseline environmental conditions in each state and then develop annual work plans/agreements/priorities for measurably improving state environmental quality and health protections

Investigate the potential for private-public partnerships in the re-mining of low metal content mine waste. Is there an opportunity for cleanups and resource extraction to occur at the same time? At what point does it become economically feasible to recover tailings in aquatic and terrestrial environments for refining? The U.S. has several large areas of mine waste where economically important metals cause environmental harm (e.g., Coeur d'Alene River ID; Torch Lake / Gay, MI Stamp sands). At these sites, full cleanup is too cost-prohibitive, but the metals are too low grade or too dispersed for industry to pursue. What type of arrangement or cost-share would get cleanup conducted at a lower cost and develop a metals recovery job sector?

Another opportunity would be to develop a public-private option for contaminated sediment cleanup, similar to cleanups performed under the Great Lakes Legacy Act. The cleanup option would focus on streamlining the identification of cleanup areas and technology selection. Areas of known contamination could be targeted and cleanups paid for using a cost-share among vested interests. Waterway cleanups create value for communities through increased use and development, they reduce private sector liabilities, and will lessen contaminant burdens in fish and water, which increases sportsmen's opportunities for harvesting and eating fish and waterfowl.

Organize 50 state "desks" or virtual teams w/HQ, regional and state personnel working together.

Each process (mandatory trainings, contracting paperworking, records management, hiring) layered on front-line employees lessens their efficiency and requires other employees to oversee the processes. It would be useful to eliminate the processes not fundamental to the employee's primary function and reinstate only those required by statute.

ORD researchers often devise their own research agendas, thus having many individual researchers pursuing individual projects. ORD can identify Program Office, Regional, and State needs and then consolidate FTE to directly address those clients' issues.

View EPA as a client-based, service-oriented organization to a better extent. Identify specific clients and needs, and approach research and policy to assist with them, especially more at the local level with states, cities, and communities.

Allow EPA staff a level of flexibility in their FTE allocation. ORD researchers, for example, are often committed to multi-year strategic plans with specific milestones, outcomes, and deliverables that commit 1.0 of their FTE with little flexibility. For example, allow EPA staff to commit 0.3 FTE to directly responding to customer needs on an ongoing basis, without necessarily tying into a specific research project, but just to assist. Milestones would come after the fact.

Simply consolidate FTE onto specific projects. Too many employees working on their own projects for too long with too much funding. Identify projects, specify amounts to accomplish them, set timelines, and assign multiple experts or allow multiple volunteers to work on them. For example, in ORD, put 20 projects on a board with expected timelines and funding, a hundred employees in the room with 0.7 FTE each to allocate across selected projects, with 0.3 FTE allowed to address ongoing 'customer service' needs.

Online wikis to identify hot topic policy or research issues to which one can contribute FTE. Portable sensor technologies are an emerging technical development that could also be leveraged, but with care and caution, to both directly and indirectly support policy and research.

In the realm of environmental protection, health is related to many inter-competing factors, ranging from chemical exposures to nutritional status. EPA has the expertise to also act as facilitator to identify these health issues and connect with other agencies (CDC, HUD, ATSDR, etc.). Formally allowing some non-regulatory approaches of monitoring, modeling, and decision science to exist within the Agency would help facilitate this effort and demonstrate that solutions can be had outside of the regulatory arena.

Consolidate FTE (i.e., assign specific tasks to multiple specific people) to focus on specific projects with specific timeframes, rather than endless projects with no set endpoint and driven by individual researchers with questionable perspectives on actual relevance. For example, prior to a research effort: 1) identify specific clients/stakeholders; 2) solicit feedback for demand; 3) identify specific timeline, funding, and expectations with regular check-ins; 4) provide specific guidance on how the impact will be measured after project completion.

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Management (on all levels) will not work with, or fire (if necessary) staff that cannot or do not work. I have seen examples of staff and management arriving late and leaving early for a period of several years- with no effort on management's part to stop the behavior. In fact, one man in my branch who came in at 9:30 and left at 2:30 for over 4 years received a year end award! Also, awards and salary increases are not tied to performance, but to favoritism...and the management catchall "we don't want to leave anyone out".

EPA needs to evaluate both the Kennedy test or the Scalia test in determining if there is a discharge to a Water of the U.S. Simply adopting the Scalia test will not ensure adequate protection of waterways as required by the Clean Water Act. There is no way to ensure that the physical, chemical and biological integrity of our waterways will be protected under the Scalia test only. And EPA using only the Scalia test for a Water of the U.S. goes against a Supreme Court Decision - which seems highly problematic.

EPA partners fairly well with EPA when we do not assume a "holier than thou" attitude. Follow regulations! If you have ideas other than regulations...they must be "recommendations" with explanations.

I also think your question doesn't discuss working with NGO's and environmental groups. They are the public, too.

EPA needs to ensure that the Carbon emissions or controlled/curtailed in accordance with the Paris agreement and that the carbon reduction goals of the Clean Power Plan, CAFE standards for autos, methane emissions from gas drilling etc. are met. Lest there will serious risks to the public at large associated with Climate Change.

I have found that better customer service includes being polite, working to find the best answers when asked for help (even if the answer isn't in EPA's purview, try to find out where it is), and telling the truth. If you aren't authorized to help - say so. If there is a regulation that needs to be followed, make sure an applicant knows about it early and assist.

It is much cheaper to protect waters of the U.S. under both the Scalia or Kennedy tests or both which help reduce pollutant and sediment discharges to our waterways. Thereby reducing flooding and water treatment costs. This is cheaper than implementing flooding controls and pollution controls after wetlands have been filled and additional pollutants added. Similarly reducing our carbon emissions will save the U.S. a lot of money in future mitigation associated with sea level rise, drought, intense storms, etc.

Get rid of dead wood.

Teach staff that the American public are our clients.

Enforce regulations fairly...and get more enforcement personnel.

Take a look at the grants EPA gives. Are they really providing what EPA wants?

Need to promote renewable energy and move away from fossil fuels. This will not only reduce our carbon emissions and reduce the impacts of climate change, but also reduce emissions of mercury, particulates, NOx and SOx. It will also foster energy independence, water pollution reductions, air pollution reductions for generations and generations to come.

Seems like a win win win.

I work in the shared responsibility of NEPA. I work with several federal agencies to make sure environmental issues are tackled at an early point in the NEPA process.

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Every employee is supposed to use a records management program to manually maintain individual emails as records. It would be much more efficient if email records were maintained on the backend at the server level.

20 hours of mandatory COR training on topics that are irrelevant to our work or contract management is a huge waste of time and resources

Administrative-type tasks (e.g., travel booking) should be centralized at the Office level so individual staff at higher GS levels do not have to waste time doing it.

Information Collection Requests should be renewed on a 5 year, rather than 3 year, basis (especially since the renewal takes a full year to complete).

The processes we had in place prior to January 20, 2017 were very effective and efficient, and promoted staff accountability. The process changes that have been made by the new political team make it difficult, cumbersome, confusing, less efficient, less effective, and promote less accountability. We should return to our former processes. I hope that the new political team will start to work with career staff as partners, that is the key improvement to making EPA work better.

We have done great work with our state, tribal, local and private sector partners as a matter of historical fact. We are now selectively choosing to make "winners" out of those who bore the cost of regulations to improve public health in the past. This is unfair to all of our stakeholders, who have been increasingly engaged over the years. We should strive to engage with ALL interested stakeholders, not just industry and Republican elected officials.

Less process surrounding web postings to allow timely distribution of technical and support materials.

All compliance dates for new regulations should be harmonized (quarterly; Jan. 1, Apr. 1, Jul. 1, Oct. 1; See how Maryland has new laws take effect). A summary of all new rules coming into compliance should be summarized on a single webpage.

If the new political team were to accept the career public servants as their peers and partners in doing the work of this Agency, we would be able to coordinate and more effectively and efficiently provide customer service to ALL of our interested stakeholders, not just those that are friendly to the political team.

I've never seen anyone use the vending machines in the pantries. They are energy inefficient and make the pantries less usable because they take up space, are loud and heat up the area.

The career staff at EPA has become an untapped resource since January. If they were viewed as partners and respected for their expertise, they would be able to help reduce costs and inefficiencies that have been created since January.

All regulatory packages should be routed electronically through ADP Tracker rather than through multiple printed copies.

The interagency review process for rule-writing needs to be improved (both at OMB and within EPA) so that the right people are aware of -and can provide input into- other agencies' actions that relate to our own.

Hire good people and then treat them with respect. Requesting input from staff is a good step but you must also listen and act upon the information provided. Summarize the input received through this request and provide details on what steps you are taking.

The Integrated Compliance Information System (ICIS) is an important database that tracks actions for NPDES, Air, and RCRA. The ICIS Support Portal includes outdated information; here's the link:
<https://icis.zendesk.com/hc/en-us>

Also, the ICIS Helpdesk (icis@epa.gov) receives questions from regions, states, and permittees; they are swamped and more often than not can take months and months to answer questions.

Can you invest more funds to update the Support Portal and invest in more helpdesk staff to respond to questions, in a timely manner? That would be so helpful, esp. for new EPA staff.

Give more frequent trainings to staff and public on how to best understand ECHO, as well as clear instructions on how to make corrections to violations shown in error using ICIS.

It would be nice to meet other regional, state, and tribal/communities, in person, via national conferences. Adobe Connect meetings are fine, but would be nice to have face-to-face interactions, too.

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The Agency needs to update their databases and technology systems. Nothing is more important than this. The systems we use are antiquated, look to People Plus, it is very difficult to request absences and the software is not robust and does not "talk" with Dept. of Treasury systems. Thus, if you are in medical leave status the codes you enter in PP are not recognized by Dept. of Treasury, this means that your PAY is impacted. The codes have to be MANUALLY changed to match, and I had issues receiving pay delayed over 6 months! The sales force project management is a joke, this needs to be changed. Why can't we use Microsoft office project? I used this in the private sector. instead of purchasing off the shelve things perhaps we need to speak with the employees.

I think everything I do to do my job is necessary

It is very hard to do this in the environment we are working with, budgets are cut and the states are feeling huge impacts.

We are funded at 2009 levels and making it very hard to carry out any of our objectives. Furthermore, we need to have open stakeholder engagement we used to have this through an agreement I think with ECOS where we could have citizens, manufacturers, companies, etc. present to discuss "hot" policy issues.

N/A

As a federal agency much of our work goes unrecognized until cuts are made, we have to let the communities and public know what we do for them. How much we work for them and the benefits. Coming from the private sector we did this often, we need to better market ourselves.

N/A

Don't get rid of the interagency workgroups, they are ideal for implementing policy and influencing others agencies.

More work at home days would allow EPA to downsize again and save on transit. GSA has introduced hoteling so not sure if that is being considered. Consolidating space would save the agency a lot of money on rent and transit.

ACS, commitment measures and the entire system needs to go away, give the program the ability to track their progress without having pie in the sky commitments that are not really achievable. It is often a guessing game to put forth ACS measures.

Not sure

Not sure I have the best insight on this issue.

As mentioned, project mgt. tools, are needed. I think having best in practice ways of managing and operating from the private sector would help a lot. However, we have to keep in mind that we are not a business, gov't was not set up that way. Inefficiency within gov't is standard due to shared powers.

Hoteling seems to be a new trend .

906 5/11/2017

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Hard copy circulation for concurrence is outdated and could be streamlined by going fully electronic.

In my role, the job requires I follow FAR standards, this ensures the Federal Gov't is not held liable for perceived favoritism with contractors and to ensure there is a fair playing field for all. This is a necessary regulation. Although we jump through hoops for equipment and software/tools to enhance our ability to work efficiently, this is more of a budget and resource (computing, etc) need. Having worked in private industry most of my career, I feel empowered more in the federal service.

I have found that regular communication and face to face meetings are especially helpful in such partnerships. It would be helpful if there were smaller offices throughout any region so that EPA employees can be closer to our partners. I am based out of the Region 2 New York City office and my state partners at New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection are often not able to get approval for out of state funding. While EPA does have an Edison facility, the meeting space is very limited requiring months in advance arrangement.

My area is already initiating and making in roads to provide services (technical services) that can both save money for EPA as well as our constituents (states, tribes, etc...) in that they can use our technical solutions. This requires flexibility in having adequate budget and staff with technical skills.

We should a more of a presence in their communities - at least at the state level.

Please see Question 2.

I think it would be a useful exercise to examine the necessity of positions for those in GS-14 level non-supervisory position. In Region 2, I know of many employees who would relish the opportunity to work out of existing Edison, NJ facility. Many employees live in NJ and endure one and half to two hour commutes each way to and from the New York City office. Employees whose permanent work location is New York City are not afforded the ability to work out of Edison at the moment. If employees were able to work out of Edison, this would further reduce the really high rent that Region 2 has. Region 2 continues to pay about a million dollars a year per floor despite the IG's report that efforts to utilize real property should be explored - Region 2 has real property with space to grow close by in Edison, New Jersey.

1. Service Oriented Architecture
2. Flexibility for hiring tech skills in house (contractor burden labor rates do not save the government \$, there must be a balanced ratio of government and contractors.

every employee should have access to adobe acrobat pro so we can sign documents electronically and combine pdfs.

See Q. 2, see Q 4. previously answered -

We do this in some areas already - shared government services (contracts); movement to the cloud. Areas for a further cost benefit may be in centralizing time recording across the government, GSA has made progress in management of space, etc...already. Outside this agency, it seems as if there are redundant services, in particular with investigative services for security clearances - OPM NBIB.

Many private sector employees are not paid out for credited for unused sick leave when they retire. We, at the federal government level, should stop this practice moving forward as it isn't conducive to a healthy office environment and potentially encourages people to not take their sick leave. I would suspect that this would reduce costs overall.

I am currently implementing many best practices in my organization, again, most of my career was with private industry. From a technical perspective:

1. Service Oriented Architecture
2. Cloud usage where ROI justifies (ROI very unique)
3. ITIL, AGILE, DEVOPS....all being implemented

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There was significant fanfare when the public was asked to comment on regulations that could be eliminated. Fair enough--the regulated communities have a lot of important knowledge (though I suspect that this initiative also generated a lot of extraneous comments).

But EPA staff was not asked to contribute to this. I inquired and was actually told that EPA staff are not requested to contribute ideas. That makes no sense. Lots of EPA employees have worked on EPA regulations over the years, and they are likely to know about useful examples, if asked. Sure, employees can contribute in their spare time from home, but there can be logistical problems. Why not just send a note down the normal chain of command so that Division Directors or Branch Chiefs ask each employee to contribute ideas for that initiative. You could even make it a contest or at least have an award ceremony with a handshake from the Administrator for each employee who suggests a regulation that is eliminated.

Provide or allow use of password managers to create and manage passwords for all of the various websites etc. that employees use in the course of business.

Minimize the number and frequency of pushed software updates and passes that cause for lost productive work time in running and restarting computers.

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Intranets:

Currently each region and HQ office manages its own intranet site. The options for hosting these sites ranges across at least three platforms, maybe more. The methods used to develop and manage the sites varies according to available resources. HQ offices tend to have more resources than the regions for this kind of support; I think the regions struggle to maintain useful, local intranets. I feel strongly that this area of internal infrastructure and communication is inefficient and uses a lot of staff time that could be devoted to other needs.

For example, some regions are moving long-held, internal content out of Lotus Notes and into SharePoint, or into a plain web server, or into a locally-managed Drupal content management system. The person(s) doing the moving are figuring out the processes as they go.

I see two major issues here: lack of agency-wide attention and management of intranets, and lack of enterprise intranet platform support.

The current HQ intranet staff is fine, I am sure they are doing the best they can with what we have. But the overall system is very piecemeal as described above and needs to be scrapped and redesigned, much like the public website was in the OneEPA initiative. Perhaps a single intranet site on a content management system (e.g., Drupal), with regional and office-related sub-sites.

It should be done now.

Telework:

I feel strongly that telework should be expanded for those who can commit to productivity while working at home. Personally, I can do my work more effectively at home, out of the busy-ness of the office. If I could work at home for say eight out of ten days (per pay period), the two days in the office could be done in a shared work space.

EPA needs to invest in staffing resources, software, and contractors to help us manage the wealth of data that EPA collects from the environment. Much of this data is difficult for the public to understand and access. EPA should move into the age of information technology and start sharing all the factual information we collect.

Open source content management systems for online, internal communication (e.g., Drupal)

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For the upcoming VERA/VSIP a baseline expectation has not been set for each NPM or RO based upon the Administrator's priorities so the result will be inconsistent and will not meet Agency goals.

A preliminary review of Regional and NPM plans should be conducted to ensure that everyone is playing fair. If RIFs are needed in FY18 - the programs/offices that offered VERA/VSIP to a large percentage of staff should not be penalized (ie., RIFs should be at the Regional, NPM/Office level versus EPA-wide) versus rolling up at the EPA level.

To initiate a hiring action, managers must fill out and sign a paper package so that someone else can enter it into an electronic system (FPPS) and they can sign it again. Very wasteful.

Every year the agency loses money to treasury because the contracts office in OARM cannot obligate the money to contracts before the money expires. We must lean this process so we can spend money on environmental protection.

To purchase furniture, you should simply be given a catalog, rather than going through a burdensome process involving a multi-thousand dollar design fee to a contractor in order to buy a new desk the same size as your old desk. This is very wasteful. In last few years, OARM has implemented a much more burdensome process to even reach the stage of having the pleasure of wasting \$2,000 before buying a new desk. And this whole process can take 6 months or more, since you must wait for your design services from a contractor who helps you select your desk, from, wait for it, a catalog.

We should eliminate non-supervisory SES positions, so that senior leaders cannot simply dump unwanted SES into unneeded positions. They should fire them or let them fill real SES jobs. We should decrease the number of non-supervisory managers in general. This would be huge cost savings with little change in quality or quantity of work performed. We should also increase the average number of employees per supervisor.

Why do all personnel actions, even details to positions with the same security clearance, require processing by the Personnel Security Branch? Seems we could save a lot of time and money by eliminating this step.

Congressional staff who need supplies simply go to the supply store. It is so easy. No one needs to stockpile unneeded supplies for a rainy day. Everyone can get what they need the day they need it. Every office has one person with a purchase card that they scan at the store to bill you, and staff know who to go to when they need something. So much time and money savings to be had by adopting this approach at EPA.

Every time we want to spend money it goes through a single, central Funds Control Officer, for the AAship. We should

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One thing that is common across government is that it takes too long to get the smallest tasks done. A good example of this can be found with grants and contracts. One way of addressing this is to seek out other Agencies with similar contracts in place that will address your organization's needs. If it is so, work towards a joint inter-agency agreement. This would streamline the process and limit many of the administrative hurdles often times when trying to achieve contracts approval. The overall benefit would be a reduction in cost which translates into savings to the taxpayers.

Management Procedures - If the Administration wants to implement change, Senior Executive Service employees must be managed as serving in their roles at the pleasure of the Administrator. Some SES members would run over their grandmothers in pursuit of the end of year bonus. The Administration can incentivize the SES to implement cost saving priorities, but they will be reluctant to give up their own turf.

When pursuing change and relying on the SES corps in EPA, the Administrator must be willing to take on the dead-enders, bitterly clinging to the past and who are waiting in hopes of January 2021. Removing a few underperforming or recalcitrant SESers from their posts, will quickly make the necessary statement.

A lot of the IT systems that we use here at the Agency can be upgraded to leverage the latest technologies available. These more intuitive and cost effective -to operate- IT systems would equip EPA staffers with the necessary tools needed to perform their jobs more quickly. This would result in an overall better use of FTE resources.

Yes there are new technologies such as many of the software as a service (SAAS) offerings with particular emphasis on the Microsoft ecosystem. This offering would work well with EPA especially since we are currently an Outlook based and SharePoint shop.

I am not aware of any precisely but we can step back, take a broad look at the many program and regional offices, have a close look at their lines of business and assess what they do and how it can be either eliminated, consolidated, or achieved in a completely different manner. All of this, while working closely with the states to ensure that we are meeting their needs and remaining the environmental stewards that we have been tasked with doing.

The Agency's grants management system is outdated, not user-friendly and sometimes not accessible. The Agency needs to be provided with the resources necessary to complete work on the new grants management system currently in development.

In my experience, EPA's management and staff are very focused on developing and sustaining strong partnerships with states, tribes and local communities that promote strong environmental results. The Agency also builds strong, mutually beneficial partnerships with those in the private sector who value economic growth and environmental protection and stewardship. The Agency will continue to achieve environmental results in partnership with states, tribes, local communities and the private sector if we have the staff and resources necessary to maintain our partnerships. The current uncertainty about EPA's priorities and our ability to provide adequate support to our state, tribal and local community partners does not help us achieve better environmental results or maintain effective partnerships. This uncertainty also hurts our relationships with the private sector who rely on EPA to help maintain a level playing field in the marketplace.

To provide the best customer service, EPA needs a workforce comprised of women and men with diverse backgrounds and experiences. We need people who are able to communicate effectively with leaders, individuals and businesses in the communities we serve. We also need to have time to communicate with the people we serve. Continued cuts in staffing and resources impairs our ability to provide good customer service.

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Invest in tribal youth to care about the human health and environment AND have the skills to back up a career in managing their own healthy environments (i.e. through universities, job training internships, etc.).

Honor the Federal Trust Responsibility the US Government has on behalf of the tribes - to an equal (if not even higher!) standard than the general public, not less.

Please, please, please invest in additional labor employee relations staff to help first line supervisors deal with low-performing employees. They are very helpful, but so backlogged it can take months to address a problem. We need them! No need for RIFs ??? just help us eliminate lowest performing 5% of agency. There are plenty of people not earning their salaries. We would easily pay back investment with increased productivity and saved salary dollars from holding employees accountable for their performance. Managers need LER support to do this.

May we please eliminate MaxiFlex? The amount of accounting required, not to mention the lost productivity from no one working common hours, is wasteful. What are we gaining from letting employees work whenever they want, except some fun congressional hearings when they realize what we are up to?

We should begin to hire more term employees as current employees retire, especially in areas like IT or research where needs may change over time. This will allow us to adapt to new leadership and priorities more easily.

Better train EPA staff on how to work/engage with HR and Admin in tandem with technical IT training for the many resources we all have but master at different levels (i.e. using things in real time, rather than theoretical PowerPoints).

Make things even more "green" to use them more efficient (i.e. solar panels, more green roofs, more permeable surfaces, higher composting and recycling rates).

Require communication across the "silos", particularly where there are synergies between program areas (i.e. where land affects water affects air affects pollutants). Similar for common services across offices (if not done already - communication for the rest of us so we know how other offices work/operate/function).

Standing meetings, with agendas, set up with advance for people to prep, templates, a CLEAR guidance and who does what when and how so efforts are not wasted/duplicated, follow-up, points of contacts for questions, get these kinds of lessons learned (positive and improvements).

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Printing and signing forms that could be signed and sent electronically with the technology we already have in place.

Management should get rid of all CFC-related events. These events are not necessary for raising money for the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) and are a significant drain on staff time. In many EPA offices, one person is designated as a CFC coordinator that creates and coordinates fun events (like office volleyball games or brownie bake-offs) for their colleagues to participate in and donate money for the CFC. These events are fairly frequent during the CFC season and people in each office often feel pressured to attend the many events and donate money. It is not necessary or appropriate to use staff time to raise money for the CFC, which is a voluntary program.

Continuing to participate in a dialogue with these many stakeholders.

Change the EPA website to make it more user-friendly to the public. Many of the websites are geared toward the regulated community (like businesses), but they are often confusing to the public at large. The website should be better engineered towards key search terms and phrases that are commonly used on Google.

Require employees know how to use basic technology available to them, such as Excel. Employees seem to waste a lot of time manually processing information rather than using basic functionality (such as tables, or sum) in Excel. A lot of employees also don't seem to realize that their process is more complex because they don't understand how quick it could be by using the technology tools available.

One great program that EPA had under the Bush administration was the Sectors Strategies program. This program was housed in the Office of Policy and created a key point of contact for each sector. The POC's job was to ensure communication flowed across the agency so that any regulations or programs that affected that sector coordinated and ensured that they did not conflict. They also provided a single conduit of information for the regulated community in that sector so that they heard EPA with one voice, not multiple voices with conflicting messages.

Accessing basic agency applications while remote on a mobile device is awful. For example, trying to put an out of the office message on from your phone (if you are unexpectedly out - and after having to go through dual authentication, then workspace login) is ridiculously difficult. You also cannot access EAS, FPPS or Concur to approve documents.

EPA needs an app! An app for smartphones that allows the public to find out the water quality (both water for drinking and recreation) in their community, pollution levels on hot days, safety of local fish for consumption, and places to take their recyclables. There might be an EPA app for businesses that helps small businesses comply with regulations, like information on where to take their used oil or other hazardous wastes.

We need to make sure that dialogue and communication is encouraged between the agencies. Shared websites and information resources would go a long way to ensure consistency between agencies. See www.cicacenter.org. Websites like the Construction Industry Compliance Assurance Center could be further expanded to include more information from states, local governments, and other federal agencies (like OSHA).

This agency badly needs standard operating procedures (SOPs) and standard templates for talking points, memos, and other commonly generated documents. Too often, our offices develop new processes and procedures from scratch, when a standard process/procedure could be implemented so that new ones do not need to be developed. Standard templates for commonly generated documents should also be developed and required for use, similar to those used by the Department of State. This will create a consistency across the agency and prevent employees from developing new formats for information or generating documents that do not contain all necessary information.

1. EPA has decentralized various functions with the idea that individual EPA staff should be expert in and expected to complete all manner of administrative functions and online systems. It does not make sense to have professional staff at relatively high salary grades spending time on matters such as travel authorizations; these matters should be handled by administrative staff. Moreover, the vendors for these systems are changed on a regular basis so by the time people finally understand how to use them, an entirely new system is put in place, which is extremely inefficient.
2. Our automated systems for tracking the hours employees work, flexiplace authorization, and leave requests should be fully integrated AND processed at the END of the pay period. Currently these systems are not integrated and are processed before the end of the pay period leading to unnecessary time spent inputting data into redundant systems and revising hours worked and leave requests.

Provide additional EPA staff and funding, rather than cutting the EPA's budget, so that we have adequate staff to conduct the immense workload we already have in house across all programs. For example, we have limited staff to issue and oversee the state issuance of permits. Increase, rather than decrease, budget and staff for EPA as well as state enforcement of our environmental laws so that we can ensure that businesses and individuals who play by the rules and comply with the law are not put at a competitive disadvantage by those who violate the laws and get away with it due to underfunded enforcement programs.

EPA needs to find a way to better automate searches through electronic documents, particularly email, in response to FOIA requests and discovery requests.

Style Manual ??? A few years??? back, the agency started using the AP style manual that mandated putting an article in front of (the) EPA, not defining acronyms in brackets, and a few other odd rules. Generally, this makes the writing harder to read, acronyms harder to find and writing less clear and frequently annoys external stakeholders such as OMB. Suggest the EPA go back to using the Plain Language guidance that it used previously.

Mandated Presentation Format ??? A few years??? ago, the agency was directed to use a standard Powerpoint template with a big green swoop at the top. This proved to use a lot of ink, be harder to read and inhibited clearly displaying charts and graphs, which are the primary purpose of Powerpoint. Most organization over time simply stopped using the format, but many are reluctant to stop without formal permission. Suggest the Chief of Staff formally rescind the directive to use a rigid template.

Systems Planning ??? There appears to be little coordination between the IT, administrative and financial systems planning efforts. Suggest a coordinated OEI, OARM and OCFO systems planning process. In particular, the three leveled financial systems planning process is bureaucratic, slow, unresponsive and wasteful. The overall EVS results for this group reflect internal dissatisfaction and other agency stakeholders seem to be unhappy about the slow pace, lack of results and time consuming nature of the meetings.

Look at untapped systems capabilities ??? EPA has dozens of IT, administrative and financial systems many with duplicative capabilities and functionalities but many also with untapped functions and capabilities. The agency could potentially leverage a lot more of these capabilities if we ask systems experts ??? what else can this system do that we aren't using? Then we can look at how we might modify processes to leverage those capabilities. Traditionally, planning tends to go the other way ??? organizations write requirements that we shape the systems around. These might not always be new technologies but they would be a new way of using them.

CMS ??? The Correspondence Management System (CMS) appears to have the potential to streamline work but in actual use seems cumbersome. Suggest a small users group look to see what modifications might help its usability and maybe look at Dept of Commerce???'s system as an alternative.

The agency uses many common systems along with other agencies ??? procurement, financial, administrative, etc. Many have user groups that have gotten stale through time. The agency could propose a combined federal effort to target a few areas, maybe beginning with procurement and financial given the importance of these systems to the DATA Act.

Creating a Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) After the CIO and CFO acts some Federal agencies created separate CIO and CFO organizations. After a few years, many of organizations created a CAO position to force the coordination of administrative, IT and financial support functions.

Systems experts planning ??? the EPA has many experts in various data systems, creating small (5 to 6) groups of experts to compare notes and discuss ideas could create options for senior management to consider.

Yes. Many organizations value and develop their employees because they recognize that morale affect productivity.
<http://smallbusiness.chron.com/correlation-between-productivity-morale-10334.html>

Things that adversely affect employee morale- quotes from the Administrator that the entire Agency under Obama Administration didn't really accomplish anything. I know that I worked really hard and accomplished a lot of environmental good over the past 8 years- regardless of politics.

Things that improve morale: respect; trust; communication; investing in relationships within your organization; recognizing and rewarding successes; and ensuring we have the resources and staffing to do the work. Also ensuring that our priorities align with our mission and our legal responsibilities.

The Agency's Working Capital Fund/Workforce Support Budgets are not adequately funded. EPA should fully fund needed IT equipment and infrastructure. EPA is unable to replace laptops when warranties expire.

Maintain strong state oversight: Continue to conduct program reviews and share best practices across states. You need effective regional offices to deliver these services. Make sure that cuts are not prorated in such a way that the smaller regions do not have sufficient staff to manage. There is a minimum size below which staffing should not go in order to have a viable regional office.

Continue to allow Indian GAP funds to be used to implement programs in Alaska.

Continue to fund programs to deal with waste issues in rural Alaska.

Continue targeted work in communities along the lines of Making a Visible Difference.

Maintain strong EPA regional offices, that build partnerships with these stakeholders.

Ensure consistency in how we apply the regulations across the country and continue a strong enforcement program.

Responsible companies do not want to see irresponsible companies getting away with not doing the right things.

Lean the process for awarding grants and contracts at HQ.

Critically examine the Human Resources Las Vegas Shared Service Center. It has not worked well, and hiring is hugely inefficient. They are unable to retain good staff, and they have an extremely highly graded, inefficient structure. We would be so much better off returning those resources to the Region.

The entire hiring process is inefficient. Devote resources to leaning the hiring process. Standardized Position Descriptions and Recruitment Packages have been helpful, but not all HR Shared Service Centers use them. We might be better off without the Las Vegas SSC.

The hiring process involves OPM and other federal agencies. It could be made much more user friendly and efficient. The biggest opportunity, however, is in working with EPA's Shared Service Centers.

The Air Advisor Program with the US Forest Service deploys trained EPA staff to wildfire events. EPA assists with monitoring, modeling, and communication of risks to communities, so that people can protect themselves from smoke. We could make the process of reimbursable funding more efficient, but other than that, it is an excellent program in support of the American public at risk from forest fires.

The West Coast Collaborative for reducing toxic diesel emissions is a fantastic model of how EPA can work across the public/private sectors.

925 5/11/2017

926 5/11/2017

We could see less of the great accomplishments of our great leaders President Donald J. Trump and Administrator Scott Pruitt touted on the website and other places like social media. Their greatness is a distraction to my work, here I am midcareer and I will never be able to accomplish a fraction of what these men have in their lifetimes. How am I, the average worker, supposed to feel when I compare what these great men have done in just 100 days to what I have done in over 10 years at the Agency. What I have done is a pittance in comparison!

We should not be changing delegations so that the Administrator makes decisions that were once made by the Regions-- this drastically slows down work getting done. Requirements for EPA staff to clear any public statements through HQ are burdensome and unnecessary. I also find myself spending hours doing administrative tasks. Our office does not have adequate administrative support.

We need to listen to the states, they have needs too and don't always have the experience, staff or other resources to get the job done. In my work they have asked EPA to help support their work and efforts. The agency has help to be a facilitator of conversations and dialogues that help all states to solve problems that are common to all states in our region.

Maintain or request additional funding for EPA programs that support the development and expansion of local, tribal and state capacity in enforcement and implementation of federal environmental laws is key.

Get good information to people the first time, via the website. In my program we refer many of the comments and complaints back to the states and local health departments as they are local issues not federal issues. Everything that I've worked on has had heavy input from the states and industries that are effected, I don't know what the administrators beef is with the way that we did things.

EPA should commit to transparency in decision-making and decision-making based on sound science and the rule of law. Decisions should always key back to our central mission, protecting human health and the environment. EPA needs to do a better job communicating the vast and multi-faceted economic benefits of our regulations, which has led to the mistaken belief that EPA is a job killer.

I think that the administrator's request for 10 staff for 24 hour security could be declined in the budget. That would reduce costs, and the amount of public affairs staff that I perceive as sitting around with nothing to do because of the focused messaging on the administrator's self perceived 'successes' could be let to do their old work again. That would be a more efficient use of staff. Looking from the outside of the agency in, it's really developed a cult of personality like we've never had before. Environmental protection is more than just this 'cooperative federalism' that the administrator touts and shining the love on coal miners, it's about people's health.

Effective and adequately funded enforcement can reduce costs by increasing compliance; non-compliance in the industry leads to increased costs to the agency from having to respond to accidents, releases, spills, etc.

Wind, solar, biomass, energy and manufacturing efficiency, these are all modern technologies that will make things more efficient, effective and accountable.

We need better IT support and updated software and adequate training on new software. This would assist in responding to FOIAs.

Everything that I work on is a shared interest with other federal agencies or states, I don't understand how people could think otherwise? Unless they hadn't taken the time to learn about the agency and the processes in place. Read a federal register notice and see what's in there, how all the comments are addressed, how the economic benefits are address. This has all been required before by previous administrations. People need to be willing to listen and learn before speaking.

In a lot of ways the private sector is just as messed up, maybe in different ways, than the public sector. But, you don't always hear the stories because they don't have some junior congressman looking to make a name for himself.

Top law firms and major companies may be helpful in assisting us with better records management and data management, particularly in the era of electronic discovery.

Delegation of authority should be rendered for all areas where this is at all possible. Generally speaking, no more than two levels above the author need or efficiently should be reviewing a document. Now of course, for really high level stuff this does not apply, but for normal day to day work it should. In my opinion, EPA has too many reviews of a average document, which can hold up progress on a project because an approval might have to go thru too many levels of review. I have previously worked in lower and middle management capacity, and as a manager, I know that if too many people look at the a document by the time everyone has made their changes it can ending up looking like the first draft, but after wasting days of review.

We should be more transparent with our documents, etc. I don't believe this is a symptom of staff not wanting to be, but that we do not have the software/databases or staff time to be more transparent. SEE Q 5

I have worked for several different government agencies and private consulting firms and must say that the lack of investment in updated, comprehensive software/databases is disappointing at EPA. We are literally over 10 years behind in technology from other GOVERNMENT agencies I have worked for. EPA is wasting a lot of taxpayer money by piece-milling so many different databases and tracking mechanisms for each different program, which is then different at each Region. As with other agencies, ideally there should be one database that has different subparts tailored to each program, not only as a document depository, but also as a tracking mechanism. This system should have the ability to allow outside parties and consultants to upload these documents, instead of sending us 5-inch thick binders that we then have to handle for decades and pay to store in some archive. This database should have a public component, where they can look at our public files at anytime, therefore reducing or nearly eliminating many FIOA requests and wasting staff time, sometimes months for each one, responding. We recently looked into implementing an electronic option for allowing outside public to submit important project documents, but it would literally cost the program \$25-\$50 per average document size to have one submitted thru this system (the program was going to have to pay a certain amount per MB, which made it more expensive than FedEx!) Serious consideration at a high level is needed to put the resources into getting an agency wide solution to this problem. Right now there are so many different computer/IT pilot studies and expenditures happening to upgrade existing versions of databases, when it seem so obvious that we should be working on one system with different modules for each program that is also possibly integrated with document retention and storage. If not integrated, at least the whole agency should be using ONE records/document together. Not different records centers and databases for different regions and programs. One should be able to sit in Denver and see a file from Atlanta and vice versa if needed. To top it off some programs don't even have a database at all, they use a local spreadsheet or worse nothing! And to top it off, we actually still use a ink stamp to date letters. Typewriter technology is better than that. PLEASE consider ultimately saving taxpayer money by stopping the segregated data storage, tracking and document storage. We do great work here, but our administrative and IT downfalls hinder our effectiveness and efficiencies.

Yes, there is a lack of administrative consistency throughout the agency, which makes us more inefficient than we could be. SEE Q 5.

928 5/12/2017

929 5/12/2017

I feel there are too many "required" training courses, seminars, overviews for an staff worker and a manager to track. A large portion of our time is spent taking annual or repetitive training such as: sexual harassment, Cyber Security, Tribal, Transit Subsidies, Time and Attendance, Travel, etc. Furthermore, even after taking these courses there is time required to enter them into data systems or manage the tracking of such info manually. Many systems are not even user friendly and require time to understand how they work.

Correspondence prepared for upper management's signature is typically printed and placed in a folder so that it can be manually concurred on by the originator up through the party that signs the document. If any of the parties concurring on the document have any edits, the folder needs to be returned to the originator and the document and file copies need to be modified and replaced. To save paper and time, it is suggested that all such correspondence be circulated, edited, and concurred on electronically with the document being printed final only when the party that is signing the document has concurred.

I do not believe we need to achieve better partnering. To me "partnering" has taken a connotation that there will cannot be disagreements or disputes. This is fundamentally wrong. Each stakeholder has their own agenda and perspective, whether that is EPA, the State, other Federal agencies, tribes, local communities or the private sector. We each have our priorities and therefore there will be differences of opinions and goals. There is nothing wrong with that. It is through the collaborative efforts that a working plan or goal is achieved.

I think you first need to ask the public what issues they have with EPA and the service they receive before asking EPA how we can make it better. There are already community meeting, advisory groups etc in which the public and other stakeholders can provide input. You need to ask them what they require.

Consistency in regulations would help. However often times there is a disconnect between Federal and State requirements which make implementation of various remedies or actions difficult.

I also think the other Federal Agencies should stop disputing EPA regulations. They often try to circumvent steps in the process which creates difficulties later in the process. Also their mentality that "one size fits all" does not work. Sometimes when some "latitude" is granted or provided, they use that latitude to be applied for every situation even when the situation does not dictate it. Then it becomes a battle to justify why the latitude was granted at one area and not another.

Whatever systems we are asked to use, they must be user friendly. Many are not straight forward and require training and repetitive applications or usage for someone to use them efficiently. They are created for everyone as if everyone will have a deep understanding of the system and their job depends upon it. However many of the systems require use maybe once or twice a year and the knowledge gained is often forgotten over the months.

I think this is no believing realistic. States do not have the resources EPA has. Many state counterparts ask EPA for assistance in the areas of enforcement since EPA has the resources and greater expertise. If one is trying to "increase" the economy or the private sector, then some States which have "more stringent" requirements not less may inhibit such growth?

No.

Re-assess the regional structure and reduce the "Regional office" size by creating smaller field/operational offices in more locations instead of having a large regional office located in expensive cities. More thoughts included in #4.

Look at the current regional structure to determine if there are opportunities to restructure that would consolidate administrative functions and create more field locations and less masses in regional office. For example, do we really need 10 ARA positions for management --- contract function should be returned to OARM and the number of ARAs for management could be reduced to three where they serve that function for many regional offices (east, central, west). Another option would model after Region 10 -- have field offices in various locations placing employees closer to states in less expensive space and therefore lead to smaller footprint needs in the main regional office.

Look across the agency at all the individuals performing administrative functions. There are more staff located in the program and regional offices performing HR, budget, contracts/grants, facilities management, etc than in most cases the OARM/OCFO offices who have delegated and legal authority to perform the function. Has to be some opportunities to delayer and obtain efficiencies.

Evaluate the role of OEI. If you look across the agency at the number of FTE devoted to IT/IM, are there opportunities to gain efficiencies by having OEI lead more of the efforts than having each individual NPM/region? Data should be gathered on not only the 2210 series employees located in each program/regional office but also all job series of individuals who are performing IT related work (i.e., 343, etc). If OEI was responsible for deciding agency systems, it could lead to more collaboration across the agency and systems that use same technologies.

Look at EPA's laboratory structure. Do we need over 25+ laboratories? Does each regional office need their own laboratory. Do we need all the ORD laboratories? There has to be a more efficient model than the current one that would lead to cost savings for the agency.

Why hasn't EPA migrated its time and attendance process to the Interior Business Center. OCFO continues to spend money on PeoplePlus when we could be serviced by another agency in a more efficient manner. EPA doesn't need to be in the business of time and attendance. Payroll and HR functions have already been migrated to IBC and as I recall the original intent was for the agency to also migrate it's time and attendance processes. What changed?

EPA migrate time and attendance function to Interior's Business Center.

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Computer access - currently we log into the EPA computer system with our smart card and pin - once into the system, we then have to input various user names and passwords to access various applications. This results in a lot of wasted time having to insert different user names and passwords, keep them current, changing them at different time intervals, etc. The EPA computer system should be reconfigured so that once you have logged into the system you do not have to use any other user names and passwords for any of the EPA applications. Single Sign On is suppose to fulfill this function but it is even not needed if the system is reconfigured as above.

Time cards - currently we are required to complete our electronic time cards prior to the end of the pay period. This results in employees having to prepare time card amendments due to changes of work schedule at the end of the pay period due to changes in work activities, leave, etc. Time card amendments result in a significant work load for time keepers, employees, managers, etc. EPA should adjust time reporting to occur after the pay period ends which would eliminate amendments. This would save a lot of administrative time wasted preparing and completing time card amendments.

At my current position, I am constantly busy and deal with a lot of work. What prevents me is the open space where I sit, that I am constantly being interrupted. But the one thing that would also be great to have a higher grade and pay. The amount of work I do, both grade and pay does not cover for all that I do.

None at this moment that I can think of

none at this moment that I can think of

Our agency works extremely hard to keep the environment safe.

Yes to update all computers and programs to current modernization.

none at this moment that I can think of

To reduce cost, employees should travel less, due to updated technology of VTC etc. no need for travel.

It would be great if we had administrative staff to help with the menial tasks, so we can concentrate on the actual work. There is way too much back and forth with concurrence's- especially when your director works in NYC and you are in NJ. It takes too much time doing it with paper, this should be all done electronically.

We work with the states and give them grants for the inspections they have primacy of. So, it would be a shame if we cut their funding by 33% - I don't think they will like our partnering anymore.

I have great relationship with our SLA's. However, we had a new regulation about 5 months into implementation and a FR notice will be sent out to possibly change elements, along with implementation. This does not help our relationship with the SLA's or the regulated community. In fact all the hard work reaching out to the regulated community, changing websites, creating materials - we now have to start over. Both the SLA's and the regulated community are not happy. They could have created a 1-2 year period of compliance assistance, without making all upset and frustrated.

I have been working here for 20 years. We are as bare bones as we have ever been. We have limited funding to travel to even complete our tasks, nevermind when public health threats happen and the need is there. We have one printer for about 20 people. No access to funding for printing, even when HQ has stopped printing materials completely and we need to print in order to send stuff to our SLA's. I think the biggest inefficiencies are the staff that do not contribute to the teams success and are of retirement age, so no one puts pressure on them. We should be able to fire people that do not pull their own weight.

All the databases created at EPA are from the lowest bidder. SO this is an area we can improve on. Also, it makes no sense that the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico are part of Region 2. They should be given to CEPD or R4- to make travel and better oversight easier.

We currently work well together.

We need to go electronic for getting upper management signatures. A lot of time it is delayed bc they are too busy. Better databases that actually work would help too. If you cannot get all the information you can before an inspection, it is hard to complete it well. Again, we should be able to fire people who do not complete their job tasks. If they got rid of these people and instilled fear that they may lose their job- it would make the agency definitely more efficient.

Reduce telework. EPA has a history of being early adopters of workplace flexibility programs which has led to what many, especially outside of the government, would probably consider an excessive use of telework. On any given Friday or Monday you will be hard pressed to find more than a handful of people in the office buildings we pay millions to either rent or maintain. While there are great benefits to individuals who participate like avoiding having to commute, there seems to be at least the possibility of less accountability and certainly it hinders the development of team work and esprit de corps. I know many folks who would have retired years ago but hold on because it is made easy for them to do so by allowing them to work out of the homes. The tool might be good in moderation and for people who are high performers. However, given the way we operate, there is an air of entitlement that accompanies the program and supervisors are hard pressed to be selective with who they approve fearing challenges from unions so unless you are such a poor performer that you are being placed on a PIP/PAP which is exceedingly rare you will more than likely get some baseline number of days away. In recent years Google and Yahoo have dialed back their programs and if a tech giant with state of the art technology and staff has struggled to make this work how a slow-moving bureaucracy without a "bottom line" to measure performance against in most cases can do so seems up for debate. It is typical for a staffer to have at least 4 days out of the 10 we are supposed to work in a pay period away from their office space. It is human nature to be less accessible to outside stakeholders and internal team members when you are remote. All one would have to do is look at the meeting calendars for people to see how telework has changed the way we do business. Telework has a place especially for emergencies, weather events and in cases where someone is crashing on a project deadline but EPA has promoted it to what seems to be an extreme. Maybe we are in line with other government organizations like DOD and DHS but I somehow doubt that their CBAs and implementation of those CBAs around telework are similar to ours.

The Protective Security Detail Framework (PSF)

Executive Summary:

The threats of the twenty first century is providing new challenges to security professionals of all disciplines. Those who are responsible for the safety and security of elected officials or political appointee's executives are facing new challenges. These challenges are created by a shift in how senior political leaders and elected officials are viewed by society at large. In the age of Social Media, leaders face criticism and scorn for what some may deem a controversial position, and in hours that criticism can reach hundreds of thousands of people. With a negative message getting into social media platforms elected and appointed officials are confronted with a serious risk from fringe groups and lone activists who in some cases are determined to use extreme means to make an example of government institutions or the political system beliefs which they perceived in a negative light. Using executive protection to address the challenges faced by those who are responsible for the safety of high profile personalities is a strong option and must be executed correctly. The role of Executive Protection (EP) is not just the physical safety of their charges, but the organization's or an agency senior official's reputation as a whole, in doing so they face challenges that can be surmounted with proper planning and preparation. Protecting officials sometimes involves long and strenuous hours that not everyone can maintain. An exhausted or physically incapable person may be more of a danger than an asset. Protective techniques are evolving in sophistication as terrorists continue to target those highly placed, visible officials. Therefore, protective detail personnel need the best training available to be able to react to the worst case scenario it may be confronted with and neutralize the threat.

Background:

The current Protective Security Detail (PSD) construct at EPA relies upon a small cadre of capable but overworked criminal investigators performing PSD duty from the Office of Enforcement and Compliance. The PSD is not a function of the OECA mission and therefore it's not sustainable for the long term. This group is short staffed, under resourced, requires a dedicated budget for operations. Therefore, the agency need to seriously assess and evaluate resources and plan for a comprehensive sustainable PSD program for the future.

1 - Streamline Grant Applications. About 10 years ago, some lame lawyers added requirements to repeat information over and over again in different sections of EPA grant solicitations. This is a huge waste of time and paper for all involved. Also, small grants (under \$25K) are now subject to the same massive paperwork requirements that large grants of hundreds of millions of dollars. There should definitely be a tiered system to streamline the process and requirements for small projects.

2 - The ACS commitment system is overly burdensome and does not drive the greatest environmental results. Essentially, there is a lengthy HQ/Regional negotiation process of "bidding" and negotiating on projected environmental results (ACS - Annual Commitment System) followed by mid-year and annual reporting. The "game" is to achieve the target number without going too far over which is perceived to mean that the organization has too many resources.

Instead, the target setting process should be done quickly by email and then positive feedback/incentives should be given to any organization that achieves greater environmental results than projected. Both results and short positive (and negative) results lessons learned should be captured annually and reported both internally and publically on our website to support transparency and greater environmental results both inside and outside of EPA.

3 - PEOPLE PLUS improvements - Link leave slips to People Plus time reporting system and allow all employees to pull back and correct leave slips without requiring a supervisor to return it. I understand this is in the works, but speeding up the changes would save a huge amount of wasted time spent correcting and revising timekeeping records.

4 - IGMS - Grants Management System Data Entry - The Grants Management electronic systems have terrible user interface and need to be overhauled (and I think this is underway). I'm confident that the new systems will also be difficult to use. There should be Grants Helpline Support Services team working with grants Project Officers (subject matter experts) to enter the new grant information into the system rather than training each person involved with the grant to use the glitchy system. It wastes a lot of time and unnecessary training that is not achieving environmental results.

Encourage and reward partners to achieve and report results that exceed projected results and collect and share online and through the media our results/lessons learned so they can be replicated.

Set up a 360 degree feedback system so that in addition to EPA reviewing our partners, they review us.

Add more real time local environmental monitoring systems that are available to the public online with both environmental data and actions that can be taken 1) on an individual level to protect human health and the environment and 2) current EPA regulatory and policy information. Provide web

Publish our annual environmental results information online (ACS) with short lessons learned summaries and set up a searchable wiki-like website interface so the public can ask and EPA can respond to at least some common questions posed.

1. Requiring HQ's oversight and approval of outreach materials at Superfund and Emergency Response sites is inefficient and adds no value given that the information being shared is very site specific and HQ's does not have the depth of knowledge about the site nor what the communities interests are. Approval for development of and dissemination of outreach materials at a Superfund and Emergency response sites should only require Regional/Program approval.
2. EJ has been engrained into every Program therefore having a separate EJ Program is inefficient and a waste of tax payer dollars. Suggest having one internal POC in each Region for EJ questions and consolidation of reporting for each Region and not an entire Program devoted to it.
3. IT needs to be centralized for all Regions and contracted out to allow for consistency in services, efficient use of resources and better access to technology.
4. Libraries are no longer utilized in the Regions given the Internet with the exception of internal research needs. Suggest eliminating libraries but keep one library expertise to perform research.
5. The approval process for videos for public use is extremely slow. By the time the video's are approved it's old news. Take a look at US Fish and Wildlife or Corp of Engineers use of social media, video's and photos, especially during an Emergency Response. Learn from our Federal partners. Why can one Federal Agency do more than another?

Increase oversight of funds distributed to states, tribes, local communities, or the private sector to ensure that the funds are being utilized for the environmental goals that were identified as part of the grant/contract/IAG etc . . . and used in a timely manner.

1. Prioritize community outreach and provide resources to better build relationships with Federal, state, local, tribal, non-profit and private sector partners. Science is a priority but science means nothing if you have bridged relationships to educate to gain support for and collaborate on EPA actions.

1. Regionally centralize outreach efforts to include EJ, CIC's for Superfund and Emergency Response, Sustainability, Children's Health, EE and place them under the Public Affairs Director for each Region. Currently outreach efforts are spread across the Region which creates missed opportunities to broaden educational and outreach opportunities to the public about all of EPA's activities. By centralizing these programs the public can expect a one stop shop of information, better use of personnel time by balancing workload and focus on priorities as well as consistency in messaging. The public doesn't break down EPA in their minds. EPA is EPA.
2. Combine media, congressional and public outreach skills under the Public Affairs position. Community Involvement Coordinators for Superfund and Emergency Response sites are a one stop shop for media, congressional, State and local government, Tribes and the public. All Public Affairs positions should be inclusive of all these responsibilities. Currently there are Public Affairs positions that only do media and Congressional Liaisons that only focus on congressional outreach. It's inefficient and creates a workload imbalance in the Regions.
3. GS14 Team Leads - There are many GS14 Team Leads that don't have supervisor authority and are Team lead of 1 to 3 people. You then have GS14 Supervisors that Supervise 3 to 16 people. Get rid of GS-14 Team Leads by either making the Supervisors or make them a GS-13 since they are not doing GS14 Supervisory work and better balance the Supervisor to staff ratio.

1. Social media, photos and videos! Utilizing newspapers to get the word out is no longer effective and puts EPA behind the message rather than in front of it. Region's need resources and support for social media and need to be able to control it from the Region. It cannot be centralized at the HQ's level. It slows the messaging down which is not what social media is about. The public want to hear more about what's going on in their local world and the Region's are in the better position to do this.
2. Resources to reach out to the public during emergency response efforts. Cell phones, IPADs, printing capability, etc. Not ever emergency response is of national significance in order to justify the need for tools to perform public outreach.

In regarding to shared responsibilities across Federal Agencies - Centralize across all agencies the Human Resources, Employee Development, IT and Administrative Support. There should be one stop shopping for all these support needs and much of it could be contracted out.

We implemented a communication outreach approach that help to reduce congressional inquires, IG inquiries and build better relationships with our congressional, State, Tribe and local partners. Any time we release information we set up briefings with our stakeholders in order of State or Tribal partners first, congressional, county then city prior to meeting with the public. This build trust with our external stakeholders by rolling out a "no surprise" approach to information. It put Congressional, State and local officials in a better position to response to public inquiries and increase support for Agency actions.

I have heard many complaints that the STICS database for tracking publications and data in ORD is cumbersome and time consuming. There are also rumors that this system will be going EPA-wide next year. Researcher are supposed to upload all data used in publications so it will be publicly available, but the system can't handle large files including most model results which can take up several terra bytes. While making data public is a good goal, it doesn't seem like the current system is able to handle the data requirements for this endeavor. Many/most journals now allow authors to pay extra to make an article publicly available. We barely have money to publish at all, let alone money to make our article open access. It seems like if EPA were serious about making EPA research open to the public, they would make it a priority to set aside money so that EPA scientists could pay to make their articles open access.

Bring IT services in-house. There are perpetual problems with IT systems and computer hardware supplied by contractors. Contractors have too much turnover, too little accountability, and get paid for service/help requests so there is no motivation to make things work the first time. A lot of time has been wasted due to remote e-mail access not working, new computers no being up to spec and having catastrophic failures within 1 yr of purchase, and EPA firewalls preventing fruitful collaboration with scientists at other federal agencies. New printers were first installed in RTP a month ago and are still not working properly. Contractors have been called over multiple times to reconfigure the printers to no avail. I expect EPA would also save money because they wouldn't have to pay the overhead for a private contractor.

It would be great if HR service was provided by staff onsite. Current HR locations don't make sense. OAQPS-RTP is serviced by staff in Las Vegas, ORD-RTP is serviced by staff in Cincinnati, while Region 4-Atlanta is serviced by HR staff in RTP. The long-distance and time differences make it difficult to have a speedy and efficient hiring process. It was much more efficient when HR was onsite in RTP. With the current set-up, we are completely disconnected from the staff who provide our HR, don't know who to connect and often can't get a timely response when we do reach out via phone or e-mail. I don't have any idea who I would contact if I had questions about my benefits.

The systems used for pay (currently People Plus), travel (currently Concur), and contracts are constantly changing. It seems like every 1-1.5 years there is a new software system being implemented or our paychecks are being handled by a different federal department. These new systems inevitably have bugs for the first 3-6 months and take time for EPA technical staff and administrative personnel to learn. The effort that goes into constantly implementing new software systems would be better spent on work that helps further EPA's mission.

OEI went through a re-organization just before the election, even over the objection of program offices in HQ. The reorganization was a "waste of time and money." The reorganizing took an organization of approx 5 offices and turned the organization into 7. Most of the reorg was to split functions that went logically together. For example, in the old structure, internal communications and management was in one. Now OEI has a management office, and a separate office to handle internal communication would save ten if not hundred thousands of dollars to put the organization back the way they were. This is just one example of the waste. Now it is my understanding that OEI is planning to spend approx. 10% of its budget to move folks and associated costs reorganization, after the fact reorganizations. I also understand OEI has spent well over \$100,000 on contractor support for the effort. What a waste of money and time.

1. Use of government purchase card -- FAR regulations and OARM have added so many new restrictions that we're unable to use the purchase card efficiently to quickly make purchases. Purchases that are less than the single purchase threshold are being forced through contracting. It took 2 months to make a \$200 purchase that a cardholder could have completed in 5 minutes. Re-examine the rules and regulations to make the use of the card efficient -- which was the intention of the program.
2. Hiring -- There is no federal government standard for declining candidates that appear on the cert. At DoD, if you could write a short justification statement why the initial candidates weren't qualified, you would get the next batch of candidates for consideration. At EPA, HR insists on calling the candidates on the cert and asking them to withdraw their application. Unless that occurs, they won't forward the next batch of candidates. There needs to be ONE federal standard.
3. Interns -- The hiring process for interns is treated like a full-time employee hire with veterans preference. This eliminates any college students without military experience. Since this is a training position, it should be open to everyone and the hiring authority should be able to select any candidate for the slot.
4. Under performing employee -- There should be a process whereby a supervisor, with corroboration from 3 employees, can provide justification for the removal of an under performing employee.

1. Some programs are split up into subdivisions to the point where there's duplication of effort and groups with similar missions aren't communicating with each other. Each program office should re-examine the various project teams to determine if there's duplication of effort and combine programs to streamline processes.

1. Terms of service -- GSA should be responsible for establishing terms of service agreements with vendors and should have a central inbox where agencies can submit requests for new vendors. Currently each agency sets up individual terms of service agreements.

2. Hiring standards -- There is no federal government standard for declining candidates that appear on the cert. At DoD, if you could write a short justification statement why the initial candidates weren't qualified, you would get the next batch of candidates for consideration. At EPA, HR insists on calling the candidates on the cert and asking them to withdraw their application. Unless that occurs, they won't forward the next batch of candidates. There needs to be ONE federal standard set by OPM that all agencies follow. Each agency shouldn't establish a different set of rules.

1. Employee and supervisor feedback: At Booz Allen Hamilton, during the annual review, managers reach out to colleagues and clients to get performance feedback on an employee. Employees are requested to provide feedback on their supervisors during reviews as well. It helps with accountability, employee development and training.

941 5/12/2017

942 5/12/2017

We have far too much mandatory training that does not impart any knowledge (you can usually just skip through it). They are often poorly designed (asking about irrelevant information--e.g., quizzes that expect you to know what year a statute became law). The technology supporting this is also bad--I've had to switch browsers to get it to work.

1. Updating the Regional Screening Level Table used in human health risk assessment is almost a year behind schedule, and there is a significant decrease in the potency of benzo(a)pyrene and the other carcinogenic PAHs as a result of IRIS revisions which is not reflected in the currently available RSL Table. All states and EPA regions use the RSLs pretty much on a daily basis, and it is a disservice to both, as well as reducing the accuracy of risk assessments, to not have the RSL table updated on the 6 month schedule previously followed.
2. The states desperately need funds for water infrastructure upgrades to ensure safe drinking water. Increase funding of the state revolving fund so that we can assure the public their drinking water is safe.
3. No state has enough money to ensure that their children in older stock housing are not being exposed to dangerous lead paint. Increase the funding to regional lead programs particularly targeted to older housing stock to provide greater enforcement assistance to reduce children's exposure to lead paint.

Reinstate the climate science website.

Our computing technology is terrible. Our computers weren't efficient when we got them (they were pretty cheap on the open market) and they've only gotten older.

We are WAY behind on cloud computing and some parts of OEI object to us using the cloud at all while, at the same time, providing us with obsolete technology.

943 5/12/2017

944 5/12/2017

Both EPA's Office of Acquisition Management and Human Resources Shared Service Centers are having a difficult time completing acquisitions/HR actions in a timely manner. In part, it seems to be an issue based on staffing levels. Would it be possible for OAM and HR SSCs to leverage the extramural and HR expertise in the program and regional offices? This could be done through consolidation of all such employees into OAM and HR, or via partnerships between these vital service centers and their business partners (program and regional offices).

Always look to simplify training requirements. Shared service centers are not always the best model. They eliminate face to face conversations, which are very important

Strong leadership that has common goals of protecting the environment, not just business interests. Regional Labs and offered services and support are a key component. The first step is to review existing programs that are successful

Local offices, partnering projects such as NARS and national conferences. Offer training and monitoring support.
Support local watershed and monitoring groups

no

Instead of new technologies, providing in-depth training to all staff on the technologies available to us (SharePoint, Skype for Business, Outlook, MS Office Suite, etc.) would greatly improve efficiency and effectiveness. The Agency should have a goal of all employees being proficient in all IT tools, and aim to have a percentage (25-50%) of staff that are considered experts or advanced users.

not that I know of

Over the last 10-15 years, the Agency has had several efforts to develop a performance management tool/system for senior executives. However, we are still without a tool that is useful at the top of the organization all the way down to our smaller business units. Without such a cascading tool, we will never have good optics into the operations of the Agency. It starts with the data - what is available and it's quality - and empowering all levels of the Agency with access to the data in a dashboard that provides views at a corporate level and then allows drilling into data for individual business units. There are pockets of success related to performance management at the AA-ship level (Region 2 EPASat) down to Offices and Divisions. Look at these successes and use the knowledge gained from each to develop a tool/dashboard that will be of benefit to the Agency.

945 5/12/2017

946 5/12/2017

Agency-own initiatives would place additional workload for program offices since they would end up implementing the initiatives. Rather, workload can be better shared among offices.

Establishing clear and consistent regulatory and technical requirements, administrative procedures and goals early on would achieve environmental results more expeditiously and cost effectively.

It is clearly communicated early on what regulatory actions EPA will have to make, what are the regulatory, administrative and procedural requirements to comply with, and whether and how any comments and concerns can be addressed.

Fold OLEM/FFRRO into OLEM OSRTI. It is important that we have a consistent cleanup program for Federal and Private sites.

Improve the effectiveness of electronic files storage and share sites, such as OneDrive and SharePoint site so that they can utilized more effectively and agency wide. Currently, they tend to be cumbersome, slow and not user-friendly.

Establish an agreement with a state on work-share responsibilities where it is clearly identified which sites are the responsibility of federal or state agency. Any actions or cleanups performed under federal or state cleanup programs be also recognized as equivalent to the cleanup performed under other federal or state cleanup programs.

The administrative requirement to have employees attest and submit timecards prior to the end of the pay period prevents me from doing my job efficiently and effectively. This requirement ensures a significant portion of timecards are actually incorrect when submitted and causes significant administrative burden on employees, time keepers, and first line supervisors in order to amend these timecards in arrears. The Agency needs to revise the payroll process so that employees attest to their time the Monday after the pay period ends and supervisors approve time the Tuesday after the pay period ends.

Currently, the Agency partners with states and tribes in a number of ways with the majority of the Agency's budget allocated to these partnerships. The simplest, most direct way to achieve better environmental results is to improve the data systems which EPA, the states, and tribes use to track the environmental results of their work. Improving data collection and storage will facilitate a sound assessment of areas where results from our partnerships need improvement or are very effective.

The Agency should devote adequate resources to bring major work processes on-line and upgrade existing data management systems. This is one of the most important things the Agency can do to provide for better customer service to states, tribes, local communities, the regulated community and the public at large.

Integrating enforcement functions into the environmental programs they support would reduce cost and inefficiencies while maintaining environmental protections. For example, this would provide the opportunity to have pesticide labels reviewed for practical enforceability before being approved for use thus making compliance easier for the regulated community and enforcement more straight forward for the Agency. It would also make coordination with states and the regulated community simpler and more straightforward.

Another untapped opportunity is the opportunity to review Agency work processes in terms of governance criteria rather than business criteria. Governance criteria include statutory/regulatory basis, efficiency, data quality, transparency, documentation of decisions, and responsiveness to inquiries from the public, Congress, states, and regulated community.

The Agency needs review it's process for developing and implementing electronic information management systems (i.e. stand alone and on-line databases). Currently, it is difficult, costly, and time consuming for programs to get data systems developed and implemented. Specifically, the Agency needs to revise the current process so that 1) system users control the design and roll-out of a data system 2) the Agency can access appropriate technical expertise in a timely manner to keep up with advancing technology and 3) purposely allocate sufficient resources to both support existing data systems and upgrade outmoded systems. As a first step in this process, the Agency should develop a clearinghouse where HQ and Regions can see and easily adopt systems that have already been paid for and are in use. This clearinghouse could also be analyzed to see what are the most needed/used systems agency-wide. Upgrading many of these systems would also make the Agency more accountable to the public, Congress, and Agency leadership.

Within certain programs like Superfund there are established coordination groups, such as the Regional Response Team, which facilitate communication between state and federal agencies. These groups are staffed by GS-15 and lower personnel and generally do a good job of transferring information and fostering organizational trust. However, above the GS level in the Agency there seems to be a lack of similar established inter-agency groups that regularly meet to perform the same general function. This results in operational inefficiencies because when a particular decision or action is finally needed, information flow tends to reverse flowing from the top down to the bottom yet the Agency is stove piped above the GS levels of the organization and lacks coordination mechanisms with other federal agencies and states. The Agency should review it's process for regular and routine coordination with other federal agencies and states at organizational levels above the GS staffing. Such a group would be an excellent forum to have this discussion about realignment of activities in areas of shared responsibility. Any such group should involve, at a minimum, the Department of Interior, the Corps of Engineers, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Coast Guard.

The electronic Daily Flexible Schedule Tracking system used by my organization is a best practice that should be considered for adoption across the agency.

The Credentials process is slow and cumbersome. There is a considerable amount of training for staff who need credentials. All of that is verified by supervisors. Then all the certificates are sent through several layers of staff before going to HQ for more review. The simplest thing can send the entire packet back for the approval process to start all over again instead of an easy update/fix/answer to the person needing the information. In addition, the most recently hired staff who have taken over a year to go through the training and the entire paperwork submittal and finally received their credentials in early 2017 have expiration dates of this year as well. This is ridiculous for those who need credentials to do their jobs.

Management is sometimes involved in so much tracking of the details of staff that they have less time to contribute to staff needs. This may be in specific hierarchies rather than EPA-wide. But in my area the supervisors have to track employee work in fine detail, leaving them to complain about how much time they spend at simple data entry into a tracking system for the higher leadership of the division. This leaves less time for our supervisors to actually help staff where needed.

Our region is moving to an open-office concept with the next move (in 2019). The cubicles will be considerably shorter where standing desks will have staff looking over each other's cube walls. This will allow for "visual noise" that is currently not a problem. Staff have been given the opportunity by leadership to "vote" on the new cubicles, but even with majority voting for the same height cubicles, the decision was to go with shorter walls anyway. This will only cause problems with staff being distracted from their work due to "visual noise". Data is now coming out where companies that went with open office concepts are now trying to fix this problem, but our region is only moving right into that problem (for 20 years, the next lease agreement).

There should be more transparency with ALL data regarding chemical approvals and reviews - or other experiments, peer reviews, scientific processes, etc. Third parties, and other peer reviewers, should be allowed access to the data from EPA as well as the private sector for the purpose of peer reviews and verifications where the EPA is lacking due to insufficient funds, time, and staff. This would allow a stronger, more accurate, peer review process and help EPA make better decisions. In addition, ALL private sector data, including that which is deemed insufficient for any reason should be submitted to EPA for any chemical, or other, approval process. Data submitted should not be limited to "successful outcomes" only.

Allow EPA staff from all areas to live and work in all areas of the country rather than consolidating them in mostly regions and HQ. This would free up travel funds to be used for more travel and allow staff to work more closely with their state, tribal, community, and regulated entities. For example, inspectors could live and work in each of the states their regions oversee. The regional offices could be made smaller. And, more travel would be considered local, not include hotels and airfare, etc. This would save EPA more money, yet getting a lot more accomplished.

More money for states that have delegated authority. Some do not pay their staff very well (considering their education/experience) or have enough funds for travel, compliance assistance, etc. When this happens, EPA is obligated to step in and help the states. However, that can take time/money away from EPA priorities.

In addition, "politics" get in the way at the state level whereby EPA must step in and assist again. If state staff could do their work without the politics getting in their way, there would be less disparity between larger regulated facilities and smaller ones (due to the larger ones having more money and power at the legislative level). This is simply unfair to all regulated entities. This same problem can be seen at the federal level as well. I don't have an idea to fix this, but it is an issue that needs to be addressed at a leadership level.

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I suggest EPA leadership work on a better "fairness factor" across the country. When a facility is in violation of regulations they need to be treated the same as others, regardless of who their congressmen are, how much money they have contributed to political campaigns, or their lawyers. Unfortunately, due to politics, it appears that sometimes companies get away with non-compliance or do not have to "pay the price" in an appropriate punishment. This is unfair to companies that are complying (and paying more in costs to comply) and smaller companies with a lack of "political clout". This also encourages others to violate, as it's cheaper than complying. Altogether, this makes our environment healthier to the citizens who pay their taxes for EPA to do its job.

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More communication, and follow through, in regard to enforcement staff and permit writing. Both states and the EPA sometimes write permits that are too convoluted to enforce. When inspectors and enforcement staff find the complications and communicate it to the appropriate permit division, many times those concerns are ignored. This is not only difficult for the inspectors and enforcement staff, but also difficult for the regulated facility to understand and follow.

Have leadership investigate the State of MI DEQ "MiWaters" program. Something similar would be so much more efficient and effective for staff, and the public, in tracking, mapping, permitting, etc. It is a "one stop shop" rather than the various websites we use now that are not connected. EPA is behind states and some local governments in the use of technology.

HQ and DOJ staff need to get out in the field more, with their enforcement staff and inspectors, to truly understand what is reality regarding the regulated entities. They just don't see the big picture sometimes, or the important details. They are stuck in their own worlds, incapable of seeing the other side. Giving them the opportunities to work with the regions more closely by sending them out to the regions would be considerably more effective. This should mean HQ actually live and work in the various regions, rather than from D.C.

More communication, and follow through, in regard to enforcement staff and permit writing. Both states and the EPA sometimes write permits that are too convoluted to enforce. When inspectors and enforcement staff find the complications and communicate it to the appropriate permit division, many times those concerns are ignored. This is not only difficult for the inspectors and enforcement staff, but also difficult for the regulated facility to understand and follow.

Perform more state oversight inspections, and follow-up to state enforcement cases, with more communication in regard to ensuring states are fulfilling their responsibilities in both areas.

EPA and the US Archive have, for the first time ever, created duplicate websites that preserve the White House and Agency sites the day before President Trump was inaugurated. The reasons given for this is to reduce the number of FOIA requests, but I question whether or not the demand remains high so long after the initial outrage around the president's inauguration. Also, we are violating long-established web policies that discourage duplicate web content, and we are causing confusion and suspicion even among savvy web users because of it. For example, I found the snapshot while searching the internet for pesticide information. The red banner across the top doesn't load as quickly as the rest of the page, so I'd already scrolled down and didn't realize I was in the duplicate site. The information I found was outdated, but I didn't realize it until later. I also received an inquiry from the Oregon Department of Agriculture asking about a water quality standard that changed between the snapshot and early February. The change was perfectly legitimate and supported by robust science, but the appearance to ODA pesticide officials was that something odd had happened once President Trump took office. Several of our experts invested time explaining the updated standard to ODA, but none of that would have happened if epa.gov only hosted one copy of itself. The snapshot site should be taken down, and I'd recommend the same thing for the duplicate whitehouse.gov site hosted by the Archive, since it gives the strong impression that Barrack Obama is America's president.

I'd also note that there was no mad scramble to preserve these websites on President Bush's last day in office, suggesting that this is partisan-driven.

Feel free to contact me if you have questions or comments on this: **[REDACTED B6]**

Eliminate duplicate content from our website that confounds internet searches, including the January 19, 2017 Snapshot, as well as all web material that is outside of our specific area of expertise.

One of my tasks is to respond to correspondence (i.e. letters, emails, and webmails) from stakeholders for the Office of Pesticide Programs. Pesticides are controversial, and we are positively buried with letters of complaint from people who have invested no time reading through the extensive material we provide on our website. We get buried with 'click-to-send' and postcard campaigns demanding regulatory action, as if pesticides are regulated on a quasi-democratic basis in which the loudest people shouting decide for everyone else. More recently, we have been inundated with interview requests from 3rd grade to university graduate students whose teachers and professors are employing "new civics" to promote left-leaning activism. Instead of reading our website to learn how pesticides are regulated to ensure safety, they want to know what actions could be taken to avoid the harm that pesticides are causing, as if the alleged harm is a matter of fact. This is fairly pure eco-propaganda, and it wastes government resources participating in the education system's New Civics experiment. Administrator McCarthy was, not surprisingly, a huge fan of New Civics. It was her policy to personally sign every grade and high school student letter response, and each one invited students to follow her climate change tweets and other issues on Facebook. It was, from my perspective, an appalling activist recruiting campaign that was inappropriate for a federal agency.

That said, I am a huge fan of the Constitution and all of the Bill of Rights, and I firmly believe in the right of the people to petition their government for redress of grievances. New Civics' 'petitions' simply parrot what people have been told to say by eco-advocates; they are not petitions in the sense articulated in the 1st Amendment. I propose a correspondence policy change in which EPA (and perhaps the rest of the federal government) would no longer respond to correspondence on issues that are already explained on our website. Where citizens bring a fresh perspective, we should absolutely be responsive. But it is an irresponsible waste of taxpayer dollars to employ federal staff to process correspondence from ignoramuses who care enough to click-to-send, but not enough to actually read up on the topic at hand. While this policy change would reduce the need for correspondence response writers, we would need to do a better job ensuring that our websites are properly and professionally maintained so people can actually find information.

Feel free to contact me if you have questions or comments on this: **[REDACTED B6]**

Ensure that EPA is not providing information on its website that is outside of our specific jurisdictions, and that we are not competing with other federal agencies on identical topics. For example, we have thousands of web pages providing information (some of which is demonstrably inaccurate) about bed bugs, zika, mosquitoes, etc., when our actual area of expertise is regulating pesticides that are used to mitigate these things. Some of our information is demonstrably wrong (e.g. the page covering state and local laws pertaining to bed bugs), and the CDC has even more content than we do on bed bugs and mosquitoes. The federal government shouldn't compete for clicks. EPA should stay in its lane and only provide information relevant to pesticides and other things that are within our jurisdiction. Where states have primacy, which is the case on many environmental issues, we should limit information on our websites only to the federal level (consistent with the federalism model articulated in the Constitution). Doing this would make our website a lot smaller than it is now, which would make it that much easier for people to find the information they need.

Feel free to contact me if you have questions or comments on this: **[REDACTED B6]**

The new layer of review and deep skepticism about our current work by the new administration prevents us from doing our job efficiently and effectively.

Several matters have been scaled back or abandoned by the new administration, without regard for their established merits, thus further preventing us from doing our jobs efficiently and effectively.

Key legal authorities that allow us to protect public health and the environment have been abandoned or diminished, contrary to the law, thus further preventing us from doing our jobs efficiently and effectively.

The new administrator and president have repeatedly accused EPA staff of violating the law, taking people's property, and harming business, all without evidence, thus demoralizing the staff and reducing our efficiency and effectiveness.

The new administration has diminished our proper role in overseeing the state programs, insisting on greater deference to state actions that do not comply with federal law, returning us to the days before federal environmental standards, thus preventing us from doing our jobs efficiently and effectively.

Fully embrace our authority to protect all Americans and our environment from pollution by insisting that all states comply with federal standards in their implementation of environmental laws, and not walking away from our responsibility to do so.

Provide greater funding and technical assistance to states, tribes, and local communities to help them develop the capacity to fully implement federal environmental standards and improve environmentally protective infrastructure. Send a clear signal to the private sector that the protection of public health and the environment are a priority and create a level playing field for good private actors by punishing those private actors who violate federal environmental laws. In addition, the new administration should stop playing favorites to industry at the expense of public health and the environment.

The states, tribes, local communities, and the regulated "community" are not our customers.

The public at large is our only customer.

See above suggestions about better enforcing federal environmental standards to protect public health and the environment and providing adequate funding and technical support for states, tribes, and local communities.

Keep the Clean Water Rule, in order to reduce uncertainty in enforcing the CWA, and the attendant additional costs and litigation risk.

Keep the Clean Power Plan, in order to continue the ineluctable transition to a clean energy economy, and avoid the additional costs of changing direction and then, ultimately, returning to the right path once this administration is gone in less than four years.

Defend all rules that reduce pollution and protect public health, and continue to follow the command of the various environmental laws to ratchet down the allowable levels of pollution, with a goal of eliminating all pollution possible, to make American great.

Restore science and the law to their rightful roles as the basis of all agency decision-making, restore all deleted/removed scientific information that is unfavorable to the current administration's mistaken view that climate change is a hoax, reveal all meetings that the administration, including the president, has with lobbyists and other stakeholders in order to restore the public's confidence that the agency is working for them, and not for moneyed interests.

This question is incomprehensible.

Adopt private sector compensation scales to attract and retain talented people and to reward those who have committed themselves to public service. Some of this money could come from the savings achieved if the president stops traveling to his resort for "meetings".

Remove all leaders and staff who do not believe in and advance the responsibilities and authorities given to the agency by Congress and the American people to protect public health and the environment.

Reporting the same, or similar, information to different levels of management in different formats is highly inefficient. There should be one or two formats selected that all levels of management are required to use. An automated system, such as Region 4's "Superfund Activities Management System" (SAMS), should then be adopted and used by all to generate these standard formatted reports. Such a system can also be directly accessed by those that might need information quickly, such as the press office or Administrator's Office. No need to send out requests that ask for information that has already been reported.

(1) Strong oversight of State programs is the only way to ensure that better environmental results will be consistently achieved. Without it, states will sometimes divert dollars to other things or succumb to political and economic pressures that may conflict with environmental results. With strong oversight by the EPA, the states (and tribes) can take the lead on more activities without compromising results. (2) We need to maintain a viable enforcement program with predictable consequences for violations. This is where the private sector comes in - large entities are motivated by the desire to keep a clean record; smaller players are motivated by a desire to avoid fines.

Customer service can be resource intensive. If our workforce is significantly cut, our ability to provide customer service will be reduced. Assuming we do delegate more to states and tribes, good reporting systems are needed if EPA is expected to be responsive to questions from the public, elected officials, etc. It is highly inefficient to expect staff to hunt down answers on an ad hoc basis when questions are asked.

I have never worked in a non-program position, but from my perspective, we have too many people working in such positions. We should put more of our resources on the front lines in the programs. This includes looking at HQs staffing levels and possibly reassigning FTEs to the regions.

Due to our variety of work schedule options and growing use of telework, we need to put some kind of electronic system in place to keep up with who is "on the clock" and where they are. I don't know exactly what is available, but PeoplePlus is not sufficient for this purpose.

Possibly with contracting. I note that we already use shared service centers for travel and Human Resource functions, but it is not clear to me that resources were saved, and customer service has generally declined when these activities were centralized.

Currently, electronic time cards must be submitted by employees prior to the end of the pay period, requiring the last day's work information to be an estimate instead of fact. Consequently, corrections must be made several days after the pay period closes if the data for the last work day differs from the employee's estimate. Time spent by employees to make after-the-fact corrections could be eliminated if time card submittal were to happen after the pay period ends.

The five tier performance appraisal system would be simpler and easier for managers and employees to use if it were only 4 tiers. While the vast majority of EPA workers are skilled, dedicated professionals, our agency, like every other organization has poor performers. The process for removal of poor performers should be made shorter and less complex, while preserving vital due process rights.

Recognize that EPA is the preeminent environmental research organization the world, and that states, tribes, local governments, and foreign governments all rely on our research to set standards and develop policies. The proposed massive cuts to EPA's research and development budgets would cripple environmental and public health protections at all levels

Stop hiring introverts. Hire people who actually like and want to talk to people. Not everyone is cut out to do customer service and I am afraid, we have too many of them.

The Controlled Correspondence Process is broken. As many as 25 or more people may write, edit, compile, process, and carry a file folder for a simple piece of correspondence. Way too many people are involved in the review process.

Combine OCFO and OARM

Stop hiring people just because we have vacant FTEs. There are countless employees who are underutilized or bored doing less than 2 hours of work a day. Their work is project-specific, seasonal, or simply does not require the level of effort that their managers believe or have been told it takes to do the work. You could easily get rid of 1/3 of the people here and function just as effectively.

Every Administration comes and with priorities. There are always new reports and charts to be filled out and projects and strategies to track. But where each Administration fails is that they bring in new assignments, but rarely tell people to stop doing what they have been doing. Consequently everyone says they are overburdened doing their regular job and these new assignments. People keep doing their regular jobs because that is the work they like or feel most comfortable doing. There are many things we could and should stop doing -- but because there is no direction -- we keep doing them.

I can't count the number of FTE hours spent each year on the Employee Viewpoint Survey, CFC fundraising campaigns and collection of Food for Feds Feed Families. It used to be you got a book, decided if you wanted to give, made a personal contribution and that was it. Now we have employees who spend hours and hours of their time planning and implementing fundraising events and collection campaigns, and beating up on people to take the EVS. It has gotten way, way out of hand. I am tired of feeling guilty and coerced to participate in these activities.

SharePoint is not universally accepted, nor ideal.

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Transfer some of our energy-related work to DOE.

Eliminate OITA - Transfer resources to USAID or State Department

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In the Office of Pesticide Programs registering pesticides is a core component of our jobs and providing clear and consistent product labels is critical to our success. The way a label review is conducted is the same today as it was 30 years ago. The best investment of tax dollars for this program would be to support the "Smart Label" effort and to provide funding so it is fully functional. This will allow for greater efficiencies on the Product Management Teams where staff can review labels much faster and ensure consistency. This will also make the review process in the supporting divisions more efficient since the labels will be clear so the assumptions used in risk assessment will be realistic and not open to interpretation.

1. The FPPS system for processing personnel actions. Outdated and should be replaced. another federal Agency must have a better system than this.
2. EPA Quality Assurance Field Activities Procedure (QAFAP-CIO-2105-P-02.0) All ten regions and 6 HQ AAships were required to develop their own management system to implement this procedure, instead of having one uniform management system across the entire Agency. Should not replicate this for future endeavors that are Agency wide. have one system for everyone to use.

EPA has excellent field resources (sampling, analytical, quality assurance) that states could take advantage of but for whatever reason are generally reluctant to ask for.

Train staff in customer service and make this an accountability measure.

List EPA' capabilities to support States, tribes, etc. on out EPA.gov website.

I work in the Office of Pesticide Programs. At one point the office had approximately 1000 employees. As the increase in staffing occurred many divisions created a second position for a deputy director or assistant director so that there is a division director and two deputy positions. Now that the office has been reduced in size considerably I question the need for divisions that now have staff numbers below 100 people to have two deputy positions. I think these positions could be eliminated and deputies be reassigned to fill the many vacant branch chief positions. The program seems to be placing an emphasis on filling all the management positions and leaving vacant many staff positions leaving fewer and fewer staff to complete the core work of the program. There has been a considerable reduction in staff numbers but approximately the same number of managers.

Too many positions in Washington DC; would be better utilized in the 10 regions where the day-to-day interaction with states happens.

Spend the money and support the "Smart Labeling" project in the Office of Pesticide Programs. Modernize the data storage in OPP - do not take away Lotus Notes until there is a system in place where reviews can be retrieved and stored so they are easily found in the future. The plans to take away Lotus Notes and to rely on Documentum where reviews cannot be sorted in anyway will make this program even more inefficient and will be very disruptive.

Use tablets to conduct field work and upload results directly back into Agency systems to update data systems, create reports.

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To me, the biggest administrative hurdle I face is that headquarters approval is necessary for a lot of actions and decisions taken by the Regions. This puts a lot of onus on HQ and a lot of time is wasted in resolving issues. I believe Regions are quite capable of making informed decisions and as long as guidelines are clear and are being followed, Regions need to be delegated these authorities. This will save tremendous time and free up HQ for more important tasks at hand.

Consider moving entire headquarters components out of the beltway to increase the application of common sense in completing our jobs, As an example, an Office of General Counsel located in "fly-over" country could do the job done by our D.C, colleagues in a much more effective and efficient way because they'd more likely focus their efforts on legal analysis than grandiose visions of how the agency ought to work.

Periodic meetings and interactions will help forge better relationships.

I believe where the states and private sector struggle is the lack of proper guidance from EPA regarding rule implementation, and NOT the rule itself. EPA should make it a point to disseminate implementation guidance faster and be very clear and precise on what is expected from the States and private sector. I have found that Industry does not resist regulations itself, but struggle on certain implementation aspects. So really the answer lies not in de-regulating, but in better guidance.

Provide states all the flexibility under the various environmental laws to design their compliance inspection programs that is most effective for their state. There should still be a process for EPA to reach consensus with states, but one size fits all policies should end or be loosened considerably.

Frequent interactions with all these stakeholders will help reduce cynicism and create more trust in what EPA is doing.

Make measurable customer service standards part of every SESer performance (and therefore bonus pool) evaluation.

EPA's research lab is doing wonderful research on current environmental issues, health impacts and monitoring technologies. These take time but are long-lasting. There are some activities where the costs and time taken cannot be a measure of success. The regulations that result from this research set an example not only in the US but across the world.

Inefficiencies that can be reduced are administrative and bureaucratic in nature. Why should a letter travel so many rounds before getting signed? A permit takes 2-3 weeks to do the rounds before getting signed. The reason is that we are trying to make sure there is no language for which we will be held liable. I believe the same can be achieved by proper training and guidance to all levels of career staff, so that the final product will look the same whether it is coming from a staff level person or a managerial level person.

Move HQ operations out of D.C, and into "flyover" country.

In Region 5 Superfund, the community involvement section used to be part of the Community, Land and Revitalization Branch. Last Fall, Superfund reorganized (again), introduced the new Land and Revitalization Branch, and put the CI section into the newly-created Operations Management Branch. OMB handles records management, contracts, data and budget/funding (and now community involvement) for all of Superfund. It made more sense to have a CLRB where we worked closely (or could work closely) with our co-workers who handle brownfields, redevelopment, and tribal relations. There is often crossover between Superfund sites and brownfields/redevelopment projects and tribes. The CI section maintains relationships with municipalities, tribes, and community groups and can help identify possible brownfields/redevelopment projects upon completion of cleanups. The CI section can also help facilitate meetings with the community and the appropriate Superfund revitalization staff. Since the reorganization, the CI section works for a branch chief (who sits on a different floor) in OMB whose background is in contracts and admits knowing very little about community involvement work. On the other hand, the LRB branch chief's experience includes being a Superfund site remedial project manager and section chief as well as a brownfields section chief. He has a better idea of what community involvement is about and would be better at fostering relationships among Region 5 employees who work in communities. Since our reorganization, we rarely see each other so we don't think about communicating with each other. I would address this by bringing back the former Community, Land and Revitalization Branch in Superfund and have us all sit on the same floor again so we can continue to better work together and to better work for citizens living near Superfund sites.

See my comment in number 1.

Criminal Investigation Division (CID): a major limiting factor to our CID's organizational effectiveness is the organizational structure under which CID falls. We currently report through CID management, to OCEFT, and to OECA. In this capacity, there are multiple layers of attorneys, many of whom have never been a criminal prosecutor (mostly within the civil programs), who many times block our efforts to conduct investigations. I would address this by taking the criminal program out of OECA\OCEFT and re-align it directly under the Office of the Administrator, with the Director/CID, reporting directly to the Administrator. This would allow for a more effective use of the law enforcement personnel, to address criminal violations of top concern to the Administrator, as well as provide additional resources to the Protective Service Detail (PSD). The PSD should be realigned under CID.

Additionally, due to the sensitive nature of criminal investigations and the potential impact (both positive and negative) CID's investigations may have on the public, as well as the Agency's reputation, the Administrator should have direct control over these assets. Finally, this would allow for the removal of several layers of management, and possible elimination of those FTEs, which are currently unneeded and wasteful.

There seems to be an expectation for many of my coworkers to depend on contractors to do a portion of their work. While contractors are valuable assets to EPA operations, I believe their misuse is rampant, and much of the work can be done in-house. When I write a document, and someone requires it to be proofed by a contractor prior to official send-out, it's a waste of time and money.

Allowing each region to communicate with each state/tribe in their region would be an excellent way to start. There are some very odd lines of territorial behaviors combined with a "who stole my cheese?" mentality in the regional offices. For instance, the Navajo have lands in Region 6, but Region 6 has to go through Region 9 to speak with the Navajo. So if something happens in our Region, we have to go through another to start the communication process. It really slows down everything. In what business does that type of communication process flourish? The answer is none.

Break down the barriers of stop gaps in communications due to territory or bad employees. Foster a team mentality for handling state, tribe and community outreach.

Fostering a one agency, one mission, attitude would help for a better agency. Instead of the different regional offices treating one another like foreign countries with completely opposite ideas on how to complete their mission, a top-down restructuring format for each program would aid here. Each region should have the same systems, positions and rules.

Continued reliance of automated systems instead of human-produced, paper-based ways. For instance, the agency was using sign-in sheets for Flexi-place up until a few weeks ago. That is abusive and unacceptable.

Realign agencies with similar positions that are mandated to work together on areas of combined oversight.

1. Why are we required to keep paper grant files when we have so many electronic tools to store, share, access files?
2. Why do we have so many shared drives? I:, G:, H:, etc. plus OneDrive and SharePoint. Too many - confusing and extra storage/resources used unnecessarily.
3. Provide snow tires for those driving in the north, in mountains. This is a winter driving safety issue.
4. Conduct a needs assessment (road conditions - off-road or paved, # passengers, etc.) to determine how many and what type of vehicles are needed (4x4 SUV or Sedan or Van) and then only acquire those vehicles - most of our driving is on pavement with 1 or 2 people. Yet we have a pickup, an SUV, and a Van. Wasteful of taxpayer \$.

Protect our land, water, and air - Fight climate change!

1. Rather than offer contractual services to a community or a tribe, let's give the funds to do what they need to have done. For instance, we are offering a training (by a contractor) for a very poor and needy community when they would receive a greater benefit by having some of those funds and using them in their community (employment, supplies, etc.)
2. Ask them what they want and need and then work like crazy to find out how to do it. If it's not our work, then help the community (state, tribe, industry, etc.) identify where they might get such assistance (technical, or \$)

Protect our land, water, and air - Fight climate change!

Ask them what they want. Listen. Be creative. Work hard, check back in. Form partnerships. Engage. Be respectful. When we leave, the stakeholders are still there - our goal should be to leave the community better than when we arrived and the community should feel a sense of ownership so that they carry on/protect/build upon/etc. what was put in place. There are often many ways to accomplish something - try to choose the manner that works best for that community. That is sustainable and good customer service.

Protect our land, water, and air - Fight climate change!

Stop letting highly graded and former supervisors maintain their grade level (e.g., GS-14 or GS-15) when they are no longer supervisors. If a position is eliminated and responsibilities are reduced, then the pay should go down as well. It is hard to work really hard at a lower grade level and watch former supervisors or highly graded staff (who are no longer in their managerial or positions of responsibility) continue to draw hefty salaries with a lot less work. Unfair and a waste of tax payer dollars. Also not good for employee morale. We have 2 such instances in [REDACTED B6] now only supervises 3 employees, a very inefficient supervisor:staff ratio; [REDACTED B6]). There are many such examples across government - this is not just an EPA problem. Big waste.

Protect our land, water, and air - Fight climate change!

More meetings via VTC and Skype to save travel funds. However, it is still important to be able to meet in person periodically - that is the way we build relationships with our customers.

Protect our land, water, and air - Fight climate change!

Form more partnerships with other federal agencies (part of the federal family) so we don't duplicate efforts and can leverage each others' resources for greater local impact.

Protect our land, water, and air - Fight climate change!

Listen to our customers. Provide good customer service. Show up and do your best every day for the American people.

Put leaders/managers in place who believe in EPA's mission. Hire staff who believe in EPA's mission.

Protect our land, water, and air - Fight climate change!

Keeping files in paper format costs more than just the amount for toner and paper, it costs to transfer and store records that we could scan and keep digitally. Look at the cost that the EPA is being charged to store paper records. We could cut that by 75% in a year with one or two FTEs dedicated to just scanning and properly filing the records that need to be stored for less than 10 years that have no historic need for keeping the original.

Using digital signature for signing documents and allowing employees to file records digitally would free up a lot of time and space. Also, if employees had the ability to use that technology, teleworking would be easier and given the option, more employees may opt to work from home. That could save money on building space as well as heating and cooling needs for that building.

While working at the VA, all employees had to take Six Sigma training during their orientation. My boss even made it part of my performance evaluation to work on at least one Yellow Belt project per year. When an employee is empowered to seek ways to improve processes and reduce waste in their everyday jobs, even for the little things, it helps them to constantly be mindful of how they spend their time. As public servants, we should always be on the lookout for ways to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars but they also need the tools and the backing to make those changes. Six Sigma is one program that gives a clear guide for reducing waste and increasing efficiency.

1. Structure of HR at EPA - the structure of HR at EPA does not make any sense. The HR shared service centers are not in the Office of Human Resources; our local HR "representatives" are not technically HR officials (they do not have the authority to do classification or staffing); the SSCs do not report to one person; HR information systems are seemingly from the 1980s; HR policy is rarely updated.
2. Unions -- get rid of them. They slow down all initiatives and are a relic of a previous time. Government employees do not need union reps -- please ask congress to change this law (5 USC 71) to reduce the authority that unions have in the federal government.

1. The agency's payroll system (PeoplePlus) and personnel system (FPPS) do not function well together. This creates many issues between OCFO and OARM regarding areas of responsibility, payroll, etc. This inevitably results in a turf battle between the two organizations and the results are felt by those of us in the field. EPA must adopt one uniform system to handle payroll (including time and attendance) and personnel actions. The Dept of the Interior has this capability -- it has never been explained to us why the Agency didn't purchase this capability when we moved from PeoplePlus (for personnel actions) to FPPS.

2. Agency administrative processes such as performance management (PARS) and telework are not in electronic systems. Currently, all performance agreements are done on paper. This is ABSURD and wastes so much time and energy. The Agency MUST adopt an advanced performance management technology system to make this process more efficient for managers to effectively manage performance (and for senior managers to have immediate access to subordinates' performance plans).

Agriculture is big business with big pollution. Protective language both in the Farm Bill and Patriot Act make it difficult to impossible for EPA to protect human health and the environment. We already partner because that is all we can do. More lagoons and higher density animal feeding operations lay the groundwork for problems when they fail due to age or natural disaster. Recently problems in Idaho due to flooding. EPA's hands are tied and we are unable to lead the country out of the issue. It won't happen overnight but some change needs to happen. Honestly I don't see this happening under this administration and so disappointed wasn't handled under the last but what a miracle if it did. Watch "Mad Cowboy" about the cattle rancher that spoke on the Oprah show and they both got sued because of the protective language in the patriot act. Grass raised meat is good for us. Grain fed is not. We don't have to do anything drastic or fast but just start moving in the right direction so that cattle and dairy can have some lead time and knowledge for what's coming and changing for the better of the planet, environment, public health, and the animals themselves.... let's not forget about cows/methane/amazon deforestation, if this administration would dare to bring this up when no one else, even previous democratic presidents... would absolutely amaze everyone in a good way but cattle and dairy are HUGE business/money and lobby so don't see anything changing unfortunately. Does protecting cattle production really need to be in the patriot act? Methane contributes to climate change by the way.

SRF SDWA Tribal and CWA Indian Set aside funds could feed directly into Indian Health Service (IHS) for their work prioritizing, planning, engineering and directly building or overseeing the contactors that build or refurbish drinking water and wastewater treatment plants, laying pipes, building containment/holding tanks, pump stations etc. There would need to be some sort of continued communication from the EPA tribal Drinking Water direct implementation teams in the regions with IHS and the direct implementation group seems pretty short staffed already but if the FTE overseeing the set aside programs could go to DW direct implementation it may be helpful. Might be worth checking with staff that work in the program at EPA.

Because EPA grants go to states and tribes, EPA's technical assistance/partnership efforts largely focus on states and tribes rather than local governments. However, because local governments have authority over land use planning and solid waste management, their policy and program actions play a very key role in achieving environmental results. This applies across the building and transportation infrastructure sectors (notably, local government programs that support low impact development methods provide a more cost-effective, common sense approach to clean water infrastructure). Also, local programs can give incentive to recover the lost value of material buried in landfills, typically worth millions in the accumulative for even medium-sized communities. When thousands of municipalities are dealing with the same root causes of environmental degradation, it becomes a bigger-picture problem requiring attention across levels of government. Local governments often are strapped for resources, meaning many lack funds to hire consultants and don't have the time to research available tools, resources, and best practices being implemented across the country. State governments tend to dedicate limited resources to help local agencies in non-regulatory matters. There's a distinct need and role for EPA to provide technical assistance to local governments, for example, in sharing model best practices and programmatic approaches from across the country that local governments can tailor to their own communities without reinventing the wheel. The sustainable approaches EPA can lend assistance for also reap economic benefits and create jobs in communities (e.g., smart growth infill development that revitalizes downtown businesses, renewable energy projects on brownfields that lack other redevelopment prospects, growth of businesses around expanded materials reuse and recycling, growth of green building and sustainable landscaping professionals who can speak to the lifecycle cost-savings and other wide-ranging benefits of designing or retrofitting buildings and landscapes to be more energy, water, and waste-efficient.

EPA could provide more focused technical assistance to local governments to help them meet needs they identify but have limited resources to address, specifically related to environmental issues heavily linked to local land use patterns and processes under local purview. The most efficient approach to provide better customer service to local governments is one that works across typically "siloes" federal programs and has sufficient flexibility to be responsive to areas of high priority and need identified by the local government (or group of local governments working together). Note that where coordination across EPA offices and divisions is warranted to best serve local governments, this can be difficult to inspire absent high-level organizational goals and criteria that encourage both staff and managers to coordinate across air, water, land, and other human health and environmental objectives.

In general the agency has allowed administrative requirements to get in the way of operations rather than require administrative procedures to support optimal operations. A few examples:

People Plus system: Way too much time is required for this simple task. Why do we need to fill it out prior to end of the pay period; this almost always requires staff to go into it again and correct a prior pay period. Why not just have staff fill it out once after the pay period is over.

Purchase Cards: Field staff are issued purchase cards for those infrequent times they need to purchase small items in the field. However our regional comptroller mandates that such staff will never use them resulting in needless hours and days of stressful workarounds that detracted from field operations during those infrequent needs. Note that adequate controls are in place and field purchases must still meet all the OAM requirements and have prior approval of the card holders approver.

Have one training documentation system for the entire agency: Currently most staff must meet a wide array of acquisition, health and safety, annual required agency wide, programmatic, inspector certification, Incident Command System and professional training requirements. Currently several different documentation systems are required for this training to be recorded in. This "Balkanization" requires an undue amount of time just to track our training and the systems are so bad that some regions develop their own spreadsheet or system so they can track these items. This requires FTE that would be better spent on the actual programs.

Consolidating service centers for things such as payroll may make sense on paper, but removing them from the regions has caused problems for us. The service center has made payroll errors that have taken an inordinate amount of time to fix, whereas when these functions were in the regions they were quickly resolved.

First level managers seem to be hired and evaluated on their ability and results to "manage up" rather than lead or even proactively manage their staff by objective. This adversely impacts morale and employees are not held as accountable as they should.

Encourage more joint cleanup projects with the states and local government by looking at the overall threat of a hazardous waste site prior to action by any government entity. For example many situations are stabilized by local or state agencies but they lack the resources to completely address the issue and restore a site to economic or viable community re-use. However, since the local and state agencies have mitigated the risks, the site may not present a high enough remain risk to justify EPA action. However, if we would evaluate the site prior to any government action as the baseline, we would be able to leverage the state/local immediate stabilization and the EPA's ability to complete the site.

Do a trial to re-organize me along geographic vs programmatic lines, at least as a collateral duty. This would reduce the number of points of contact to a given state or community and allow the development of personal, professional relationships. This would also improve the programmatic cross training or at least awareness of staff for professional development and reduce ???siloining???

The emergency response program on duty staff, who are on 24/7 duty aren't allowed to stage the ER trucks at their standby duty location (usually residence) during standby hours. The ER Trucks must remain at either the regional office or other central location. When the duty responder is called out, instead of jumping into their truck and immediately deployed to the response site, they must commute by whatever means available overnight to get to the ER Truck. Compounding this situation in our specific region is that private vehicles are specifically excluded from the EPA garage and mass transit, which is most staff's primary commuting method doesn't run overnight. This policy has already caused our responder a several hours delay responding during a winter snow storm this past winter. This policy was put into effect in 2016 per OGC's concerns that GOV statutes didn't allow the 1 or 2 on duty responders in each region to stage their ER trucks at the standby duty location; despite that in 1998 OGC determined this practice was permissible. In addition to an inefficiency, this policy has degraded the EPA ER programs prestige with the states and negatively impacted the ER program staff morale.

The high use of internal contractors should be re-evaluated. We have several instances where we are getting poor service yet are being charged a high price for the service. The contracting firms providing the function are charging more than double the direct and fringe cost of the employee and providing little value added. It would perhaps make more sense for this function to be a government employee, pay them 50% more to actually get qualified staff and save half the added cost the contractor charges. Reduced cost for the EPA and better results.

Use of drones at emergency responses and removal sites would greatly optimize and speed a response. We should undergo the effort required by the executive order to authorize such use. These could also be of much use in facility inspections, etc.

Internal: Related regulatory and response programs should be in the same division or branch so they can better work together and bring their collective authorities to bear to better serve communities. One example is our regional Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know/Risk Management Program and Emergency Response/Removal Program. Though we work together ad hoc on projects of interest if we were in the same branch or division this would be more institutionalized.

The response program currently co-chairs and support the Regional Response Teams which maintains a constant dialog and contact with fellow state and federal agency partners. This concept could perhaps for of use in other programs.

Our specific program uses the concept of one staff is a point of contact for each state and coordinates all program aspects with the appropriate state programs. These staff do this duty for 3-5 years to develop relationships then rotate so as to over time improve the overall group???'s relationships with the states.

Internal: Sharepoint has a long learning curve, but it???'s use has already helped our program better centralize program documentation and information. To fully leverage, this will require the proper investment in training time and courses.

To many lines of supervision. Too many supervisors without vision and lacking trust in staff to do the duties without their constant micromanagement. A new idea or project is being held hostage by the 1st line supervisor. Sometimes the ideas are presented, to later being executed by the 1st line supervisor taking away the credit to the employee. In other words, the same people are always doing the job and the staff is sitting down unable to be direct participant of the decision-making process, inhibiting the agency to move forward and be more efficient.

If the supervisory and higher management time in service be rotational after a max of 10 years- that provides opportunity to staff to demonstrate leadership abilities. The power is held by a few until they decide to retire, some of them are not efficient because they were selected due to a "like-ability" choice not by skills, experience and knowledge. If the term of supervisory is limited- rather than for life-- new ideas, new procedures can be implemented to make a program more productive. Supervisors with a history of abuse of power and discrimination should be removed immediately- waiting for a long process of investigation ended costing the agency lots of money, time and efforts to protect a manager who discriminate.

.Allow technical staff with expertise equal access to meeting with all our customers. Management keep within themselves the decision making instead of incorporating staff into the process. Again too much line of managements that is not necessary. In the private sector project are assigned to staff and the supervisor is just a liaison to move the project to fruition- not to impede it with back and forth ridiculous request that if properly assigned and discussed from the beginning it would just moved the final product to fruition. Supervisor or management delaying projects demonstrated the incapacity of that supervisor to perform efficiently trickle down to the staff an unnecessary delay and creating the disappointment and holding of creative ideas of staff since the supervisor is inefficient.

Let the staff deal directly with the states and tribes and the regulated community. Take away level of management who impede faster problems solutions. Remove all SES position and deputy positions. What type of job they do in reality ? Some of them are out of the reality of what is happening in the programs. Most of them focus their time in remove employees they don't know are performing well in their job or support discriminatory actions from supervisors.

Yes, SharePoint is a good technology to take accountability of work done and a record of productive employee- of course when micromanagement is eliminated.

Staff should be able to rotate to other areas where a project need immediate solution. Opportunity of rotational is only offered to a few, regardless of experience and interest. Usually offer to those "like" not those with expertise. A faster mechanism to facilitate rotational and supervisor removal after

Yes, the agency retain employees beyond the age of retirement. There are employees with 70 or 80years old still at the agency who have certain reduction or no productivity performance at all and no buy out plan is offered to them earlier to make them retired. That is a waste of an FTE when the employee has passed 64 years old and is incapable of being productive or is not challenged to be productive. The agency seems to be performing the duties of a senior-citizen center , it takes away the moral of staff who wants opportunities or are being working hard while others are snoozing around.

I play a part in processing FOIAs. Currently the Division Director is required to signoff on all response letters. I believe a better use of their time, and to reduce processing time a delegation to the Branch Chief for Full Responses, Partial Denials, Full Denials, and responses that are No Records should be delegated to the Section Chief.

I am a big believer in public-private partnership. However, the emphasis should be on PUBLIC. I think establishing more liaison positions/details to the states and local communities would be ideal, with a clear hierarchical order.

Such as: Region X Coordinator--> 1 state liaison for each state, per EPA division (WD, ARD, SF, etc), with one of the liaison's being the lead. Taking a person-centered approach.

Additionally, clear up gray areas about which responsibility is whose.

Private Sector: When working with facilities (public or private), it is in their interest, EPA's, America's, the public's, and the world's to be as efficient as possible, but by not leveraging the environment and human health. I believe presenting in presenting life-cycle costs, to include degradation of equipment, resources, and the health of the community should play a large role in demonstrating why control technologies, and best practices are necessary. Presenting the long-term savings of becoming compliant, will ultimately increase competitiveness, promote efficiency, and save everyone money. Do NOT kick the can down the road. We should plan for decades down the road, not just for tomorrow.

Be an engaged listener, empathize with the stakeholder, and follow-up. Good customer services goes a long way with folks. We may not be able to solve everything, but sharing with them what you can do, rather than what you can't provides a positive focus.

Yes, increase the use of electronic tools. Reporting for NGO's, governments and facilities should be centralized and streamlined. We should no longer be accepting paper, and nor should organizations be submitting paper. We have secure electronic signatures, and tools at our disposal to increase efficiency and reduce costs. This endeavor should include intense and regular training for staff so they may have confidence and competency with working with electronic tools.

Increase funding for LEAN. Freeing up resources will go a long way with folks, but it needs focus on leaning out processes needs to be a major priority.

Temporarily increase funding earmarked for reducing paper files in file rooms and at Federal Record Centers. We are paying for boxes that do not need to be physically stored, and many of the boxes at Record Centers should have been destroyed. We are wasting physical space, time, effort and storage fees on records that are eligible to be destroyed.

SharePoint, Electronic reporting submissions, and facilities should all have registered and maintained email inboxes.

I am sure it depends on the situation.

Use all available electronic tools, provide training, do not keep things we do not need to keep, reassess efficiency by inquiring to staff about issues of inefficiency, and make it a priority to cut administrative redundancies.

We seem to prioritize conference calls and webinars over face to face meetings. I suggest a greater emphasis on face to face meetings. Partnerships are based on trust. It is much more difficult to establish trust when one cannot see the person they are talking with. Of course, this will require a larger travel budget and prioritization of travel as a tool. Efficient and effective face-to-face meetings will go a long way to enhance our partnership efforts. We need to get out of our cubes in Atlanta and actually see what our partners deal with on a day to day basis.

I have worked at EPA for 27+ years. When I began my career, we hired employees with a variety of backgrounds and experiences with both conservative and liberal opinions: other govt. agencies (federal, state & local), non-governmental entities, private industry, veterans, 1st job recent college graduates, interns, etc. Because we were all had such a variety of experiences, it broadened both the depth and breadth of Agency knowledge and approach to issues. We also seemed to have a greater respect for each other and our mission. Now we focus and prioritize our hiring from Peace Corps and other liberal focused groups. I'm not suggesting the new employees are not dedicated or knowledgeable. Rather, I'm suggesting that by hiring only talent from a select group, we are narrowing our focus and our approach to completing our Agency's mission. In these partisan times, I think we need to go back to hiring from multiple sources to get the broad base of talent needed. I think it will also help us better understand the concerns of our partners and the public at large. "Real world" experience is greatly lacking in our Agency.

Considering the President's agenda to work harmoniously with business and reduce undue enforcement and regulations. Why does the EPA need an Office of Administrative Law Judges? They only rule in favor of the Agency and have a long track record of doing so. If we are reducing regulations then we should be reducing their oversight on businesses. Also it is my understanding they only hear a few EPA cases a year. The majority of their cases are other agencies. Why would we have an office wasting tax payers dollars doing other agency work?

See comment #4. EPA should use other agencies Administrative Law Judges to preside over the few cases each year. That number should be even lower with the President's agenda to reduce undue burden on private industry to be productive. Funds from that office can be diverted elsewhere and save the public unnecessary spending.

Basic functions turn into a nightmare experience for staff like on-boarding, or computer service to getting a key to your own office. This can be automated as part of ticket request for service, Region 2 has a system where you apply for a service via computer without any concerns on who you need to direct a request, simply request for a service and it gets directed to the appropriate office. Additionally add the monitoring or reply and resolution of requests. EZ-Tech service in HQ is absolutely terrible- get better service or remove the contractor. The shared services need to have a WAM/DOPO/COR, for each task, that is held accountable for not addressing timely response - performance based contract. OEI issues need to be addressed where projects still have program office control- it appears that OEI doesn't have appropriate oversight and the programs are paying for substandard service and deliverables.

Improve our database and compatibility of these database systems. Remove the program stovepipes that are blocking our ability to collaborate and cross-cutting program strategies to be leaner and more flexible. We talk a lot about this, but in practice we are weak and our own enemy. Use NEPPS better. OECA and program should have a better relationships instead confrontational.

Improve internal relationships within the agency first. See my comments in questions 1 and 2. The quality of staff impacts our ability to form relationships, the basic skills and education are lacking in the agency. EPA is heavily a science and engineering environment, as well as the need for legal skills for rule development and interruption. We need to be very thoughtful and purposeful when selecting staff for specific jobs- skills does matter for a lot of positions. As for Managers in the agency, he has many skilled engineers and scientist that don't make good managers- but the system for improving financial is to be a manager- people are being managers for the wrong reason. Lack of transition phases results in losing historical or professional knowledge, we need to be able to backfill positions before we loss the staff or manager to help the replacement in receiving the transition on knowledge.

We need more flexibility will budgeting funds like the states do under the NEPPS. Cross-cutting program strategies should be encouraged by allowing them to be funded separately to break down the stovepipes in the agency. There are some questionable selection of managers and staff that disables the ability of others to come up or even get cross-program experiences necessary to improve the staff skills and agency's ability to address the complex and multi-program issues in a efficient and effective manor.

Again, new technologies integration has been a difficult process in the government- we have too much bureaucratic red tape that inhibits that government to work efficiently and effectively and it ends up be costly to the agencies when they attempt to install technology. We need a method to get the best skilled technological experts on a temporary basis to get the technology up with agency-staff working side by side with these experts- learning the necessary skills to support the technology once the hired experts leave the project.

Tie additional funding to collaboration and integration of cross-cutting programs. Establish an efficiency or lean workgroup to assess the multi-program application to the fund allocation. The agency has to be upgraded in all aspects- staff skills, computer technology- database, modernize the office administrative abilities.

Six-sigma, 3M management of their organization, or Disney corporation management style, where the form teams are based on skill required to implement the program (can be done by automation to avoid pre-selection). We need real team building abilities- not our artificial application of management theories.

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Having to enact a Performance Assistance Period (informal) prior to completing a Performance Improvement Period (formal) for employees with performance deficiencies.

The use of user unfriendly electronic systems that are not interconnected and are NOT systems of record wastes time, paper, and space. Paper official record files are inefficient and limit management's ability to identify both need for additional training and poor performance.

I submitted some ideas last week for this question in this survey.

I think staff should be provided some customer service training.

Having more town halls to hear how the people in communities feel about the environmental challenges that they face, especially in low-income areas where they may not have other avenues to effect change.

I submitted some ideas last week for this question in this survey.

I am a fan of having easy to use IT systems for human resource functions with strong security to protect the information. It helps staff be able to self modify and update their personal records, benefits and timecards. Thus freeing up human resources to focus on being strategic, hiring and training. I wish our computers read thumb prints instead of using our badges to log on. Staff sometimes forget their badges in their computer, I have forgot a couple times too. Unfortunately, the guards downstairs have to waste time signing us in when we forget our badges in our computers. Maybe one day there will be another way via an eye scan or thumb reader to secure the computers.

Use a payroll system that interfaces with FPPS instead of using People Plus which does not. This would allow for better management of FMLA leave and how LWOP affects benefits, etc.

Centralize some of the common functions of the Agency, but being careful not to create bottlenecks. If some roles are centralized there must be enough staff in those functions to keep paperwork and work flowing smoothly. The upside is that some procedures could be standardized if those experts worked together to come up with some best practices from across the many EPA offices in the centralized fields/expertise.

Please continue the Skills Marketplace part-time detail assignments and offer more lateral full-time detail assignments to help share talented staff and grow their skills and experience more. Some of the best staff have worked in more than one EPA office. Expanding the regulatory and technical expertise of staff through on the job experience is valuable to the staff and Agency.

As a longer-term investment, efficient, user-friendly, and interconnected electronic systems would lead to improved efficiency, increased accountability, and reduced costs.

EAS the purchasing system is exceptionally inefficient, frustrating and just plain bad. As Management drives us to use it more and more ostensibly so they can track work, less and less gets done. It is a serious drag chain on productivity.

Fedconnect is difficult and frustrating for the contractors. It is unfair to small businesses who do not have the time or resources to waste.

The Agency attempts at going paperless requires double work to keep both the paper (Official copy) and the electronic copy.

The Environmental Protection Agency Acquisition Guide (EPAAG) is a joke! This replaced the Contracts Management Manual (CMM) and the Acquisition Handbook. It is 50+ separate word files (partial chapters) on a website. There is not a cohesive manual or volume. I cannot search the manual via WORD or pdf. I have to look something up in the CMM or Acquisition Handbook then use the crosswalk document, then find the appropriate word file on the table, hope it downloads correctly, then I can read it.

Three or four steps when I should be able to open a single file, and use the search tool in WORD or pdf to ???string search.???

Over the past 2+ years I have observed Managers abuse the time and attendance policies. One Manager to the tune of several hundred hours per year, another disappears for hours at a time.

None

None

Management on the whole, lacks any kind of serious business like mentality. First line managers do not even possess even basic supervisor skills. The supervisors and managers are very unskilled.

The underlying issue is the EPA's culture combined with base line budgeting. EPA personnel are not concerned with doing things more efficiently or more cost effectively.

The Programs think they are doing God's work and Management gives the appearance of only being concerned with hiring their friends and building their kingdoms.

The prevailing thought is to spend all the money so they can get their next year's money.

The problem is not the use of technology; it is the culture of EPA.

Private industry...What Jack Welch did for GE 15 years ago. Clean house on the management side, the rest will fall into line.

Rules need to apply to everyone.

Lack of internal communication from Administrator??s and AA-Ship Offices: ???Town halls??/?All hands?? at the AA-ship level to share information; Lack of political middle management; Lack of Administration that supports overall EPA mission; Unclear procedures for document review, briefings, and decision-making; Streamline, communicate and follow a consistent protocol; IT Support limitations:

- o Lack of autonomy/ability to manage basic personal settings on computers vs. need for Administrator rights: Having ability to change basic (non-security) settings at a personal level (e.g., EXAMPLE) would be supportive of efficiency/effectiveness
- o Engaging staff in identifying IT needs (e.g., software, hardware, program development, trainings)
- o Frequency and timing of updates (e.g., Java; patches; badge alert) impedes work productivity: Timing could be adjusted to avoid prime work hours
- o Continue to support the Microsoft helpline and similar resources.

* Provide attention and funding to underfunded programs; Listen and respond to states on their funding priorities; Encourage State-Federal Employee details (i.e., IPA???)s); Ensure sufficient EPA staff to coordinate with State/Tribe/Community/Private Sector counterparts; Address/support states in addressing interstate issues; Engage/collaborate with broader-based external partners/organizations -recognizing the ???bigger picture?? of EPA??s holistic Mission in addition to collaborating with local/media-driven organizations; Enhance funding to external organizations that represent states.

Preserve funding for hotlines that serve the public (and others) and support user-friendly design that allows a caller to reach a person (rather than an e-message/menu); Ensure sufficient program funding and staffing; Prioritize communication materials for outreach; Review of communication materials; Provide training to support staff in differentiating between education/outreach and lobbying thus enhancing EPA's ability to effectively communicate with states, tribes, local communities, the regulated community, and the public at large; Enhance depth, detail and resource accessibility on EPA's website.

* EPA is already running at low cost/under budget ??? some programs have done so, historically. This contributes to inefficiency, ineffectiveness, reduction in environmental protections, and ultimately, a cost burden; Ensure transition/turn-over planning to preserve institutional knowledge (e.g., develop a program/protocol/process to facilitate this); Invest in robust onboarding, long-term support and training of employees as is often done in the private sector to improve retention and productivity (e.g., Fortune 100 and 500 Companies).

* E-reporting

E-permitting; Encourage and facilitate data sharing across programs, with internal and external entities; More frequent updates of IT infrastructure ((Computers; Programs (e.g., Concur; Webforms; IGMS)); Frequency and timing of software updates (e.g., Java; patches; badge alert) impedes work productivity: Timing could be adjusted to avoid prime work hours; Enhance support for existing technologies and raise awareness of their availability and applicability to our work; Support increased interaction via remote communication (i.e., webcam functionality; training and instructions on accessible resources).

Recognize and continue existing strong partnerships with Federal and State agencies; Depoliticize interactions and scientific engagement occurring with Federal and State agencies; Encourage Federal partners to continue existing work; Strengthen/enhance communication with interagency offices and clarify roles/responsibilities of agencies on particular topics.

Trust and invest in workforce; Accountability/open communication from senior management; Look to other agencies that have administration that supports and trusts their employees, as well as their mission.

There is a lot of red tape to cross to get almost anything accomplished. Streamlining the amount of paperwork would really help. Consolidating the amount of website that the EPA uses and the amount of passwords there are: R2, Sharepoint, Concur, GSA, BENEFeds, EODS, eOPF, etc.
Having to write a procurement to just buy duck tape seems unnecessary

Currently, several regions have multiple labs for running samples. Each lab has a certain branch they are under. These labs should be consolidated or able to work together to take care of everyone needs not just their certain branch. this would allow for less down time for each lab and would increase efficacy and would follow the ONE EPA standard. The private sector operates as one business wither they are a local, national, or international company. The EPA has not embraced this idea nor adopted the ONE EPA standard. Currently, there are ten regions with ten different ways of doing the exact same task. Some of the following include:

Standardizing SOP ??? Example Groundwater SOP

Having one IT department for all the regions. This would allow for uniformity in operations between regions since everything can be accomplished by ???sharing computers?? or over the phone.

Having a single EPA page instead of R1-R10 pages. Consolidation while still staying the same thing can decrease operational cost and operation tend to run more smooth.

Having one vendor to order shirts and pen, etc.. At one point, I had to call three different regions because there was no One EPA site to take care of this. EPA headquarters in DC should solely be in charge of order apparel and sending it to the different regions.

Having only a Single SharePoint page that is developed and standardized by the IT personal instead on having ten regions create there own pages and own formats. Some regions and divisions do not even have a SharePoint page. Therefor it's incomplete and really a waste of time if it is not going to be standardized and run as a ONE EPA website.

Decreasing the length and complication of the hiring process. It took me over 14 months to be hired from the time I originally applied to the position. This is horribly inefficient and we lose the best candidates as a result.

In general, hiring a private consulting firm that specializes in increase efficiently and reducing redundancies could really benefit the agency as a whole if we are willing to change our outdated ways of operation.

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The process for getting websites updated, or creating new informational content to distribute to the public is unclear and cumbersome.

I believe the administrative requirements, management procedures, and other processes work together to make my job as efficient as possible; however, one area can be improved. The delivery of products by new vendors can make my job more efficient.

We need to be giving more funding to states and local governments so they can build capacity and expertise in these areas. AND we need to reduce the case load/project load on EPA employees so that we can spend more time advising and providing guidance to these governments so they can make the most environmentally and economically sound decisions for long term benefit to their constituents.

We can achieve better environmental results by listening to the concerns of our partners and addressing each concern step by step.

Increased hiring for all EPA programs that partner with the community in any way, and reduced case load/project load on these employees to enable them to spend more time one-on-one with communities of all sizes.

We can provide better service by interacting with our customers. Town hall meetings, webinars and face to face conferences allow all an opportunity to get to know one another and communicate directly.

Increasing our efforts in recycling can continue to reduce costs and inefficient processes. All Americans can participate in recycling.

Simply maintaining our meeting spaces and existing technology would be a huge improvement. Having updated computers and projectors that work every time in each conference room; I would like a computer that recognizes wifi without being hardwired into a network first.

Continuing to explore technologies which produce energy, such as solar and wind turbines technologies can increase our efficiency.

Encouraging federal partnership and potential cross funding opportunities so that environmental protection led by EPA is met with housing and development funding from HUD, transportation funding from DOT, measurement and improvement of health outcomes by HHS, etc. I don't feel that any of the expertise or function of any other agency mirrors that of EPA exactly, each brings a context and a knowledge of their unique issues that is important to doing the best work for our constituents.

Combining Federal Agencies may be a solution or it could produce an Agency that cannot meet the demands of the Public.

Working with communities to plan and strategize well and completely prior to beginning redevelopment has shown to attract more investment from federal, private and philanthropic resources. Though planning is not fast or exciting, it is important and useful and has shown to reduce overall project completion times and costs.

Greenspark Launched in 2014, the GreenSpark program provides an online platform for offices to launch
???challenges??? or requests for ideas from employees about how to solve a problem/meet an objective or for stories
about employees??? contributions to advancing EPA???s mission and priorities

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Management needs to help foster a culture shift. All employees should want to make processes more efficient, which is better for us - we will complete our work more efficiently and quickly, and is better for our customers. Educating employees about process improvement tools such as Lean Six Sigma and why it is useful to them on the ground in addition to the agency as a whole will help shift the culture to wanting to be more efficient which will reduce inefficiencies and costs throughout EPA.

Recommendation: To reevaluate the organizational. Fewer supervisors/managers [GS-14/GS-15] levels would dramatically reduce costs. For example, within our organization, we currently have a Branch that is composed of [1 GS-15; 2 GS-14 - supervising 3 employees @ the GS-12/GS-13 levels).

They problem with obtaining new technologies is the lack of funding to procure them and the lack of IT staff to help installing, maintain and trouble shoot throughout the lifetime of the technology. We need more IT staff before we can truly bring the EPA into the 21st century.

Phasing out mailing EPA publications and replacing that mode of communication to the public w/social media - twitter, Facebook, etc. Of all Agencies, EPA should set the example of not using printed materials to inform the public. With the thousands of boxes of materials, often outdated, the funds associated with printing these materials could be better spent.

Lean Six Sigma

A culture shift that encourages employees to want to change. Many of the long-time and/or older employees are not very open to change. And communication needs to increase among employees/sections/branches/divisions, as well.

The flexplace model in our organization is not be utilized as intended. Instead of adhering to the prescribed 2 days working from an alternate work location, the majority of the employees change their days on a weekly basis for their benefit vs. the Agency. Private sector would not allow such practices.

The Pollution Prevention Grants shouldn't be a competition for awards between the states. All the states that are interested in implementing a pollution prevention program should have access to these funds. Just take the pot of money and divide it among the states that will execute the program in their state. Then have the state compile the results for their state and send them to EPA. At the federal level we would advise and work with the states to implement the pollution prevention. The grants process is cumbersome. I'm not sure PARS is a good system. I don't think results are awarded. I think the "squeaky wheel gets the oil" and the higher rating. Almost like a popularity contest with favoritism built in.

EPA used to have two voluntary programs called National Partnership for Environmental Priorities (NPEP) and Performance Track that incentivized companies to make environmental improvements voluntarily. The programs provided awards for accomplishments and also gave regulatory relief if certain requirements were met. We should partner with trade organizations, manufacturers and vendors to manufacturers to capture the best ideas to improve efficiency, save money and reduce pollution. I think for profit companies like engineering consulting firms with specific qualifications should be allowed to compete for grant funds to do pollution prevention projects.

Praise, reward and promote the lessons learned from the voluntary environmental improvements made by businesses and other organizations.

Expand Flexiplace. I think many are recognized at EPA for making more noise than others rather than achieving tangible results. They seem to be the ones who get the higher PARS ratings. I think if concrete tangible accomplishments like pollution or costs reduced or projects completed were recognized with high PARS ratings or even monetary awards, the focus of people here would be more on concrete results and not on how many briefings one gives his division director, conference calls conducted, knowledge transfer sessions done or all day and more meetings that accomplish nothing.

We record data, reports and results in too many software packages and places. For example the same Pollution Prevention and Sustainable Materials Management information is reported to ReTRAC Connect, ACS, P2 Grants Plus and IGMS. There should be one central user friendly software data base for this information.

I would increase the coordination between DOE and EPA, because of the opportunities to work with manufacturers in improving efficiencies and reducing toxics use. In addition, I see possible coordination between FDA and EPA Pollution Prevention for food manufacturing efficiency improvements.

Our Flexiplace program saves the agency money and improves efficiency. We should increase the number of days folks can be on Flexiplace, but still make it voluntary. Most of my work can be done from anywhere or requires site visits. My commute is over an hour into to the office. So, for me it would save money on commuting costs, fuel costs and the general aggravation of dealing with traffic and an undependable train system (SEPTA).

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We have way to many training requirements that do not directly relate to our jobs. For example, staff who manage work assignments must complete 40 hours of training every two years. Most of the training has absolutely no relevance to the job requirements. The software they have to use is not user friendly. If we need training it should be tailored to the jobs staff actually perform. I recommend a through review of administrative training requirements to focus on what is really needed, and creation of one software program that personnel can use for everything related to training (there are now several)

The action development process is cumbersome and should be streamlined. The tier 3 process as practiced by OAR is sufficient to allow other AA ships to have input for almost all rules. The tier 2 and 1 designation for rulemaking should be limited to complex rules or rules that are really breaking new ground.

All these new "security requirements" create an administrative burden. For example, we now have a requirement to log on to FDMS monthly or we get locked out of our account. There is no way this is a legitimate security concern. But if you ask OEI why they give you this bureaucratic answer that we are obligated to do this by new security requirements. Based on that FDMS actually does, and how it is actually used, I absolutely can't believe this is true. Also, when they added the requirement to use a smart card to unlock your computer, OEI came up with the most aggravating system possible to remind you to remove your smart card. These are just two examples that come to mind, there are probably others. We need an outside entity to review all these security requirements (as in not OEI) and get rid of things we don't really need to be doing, and make the things we need to do more user friendly.

In Region 8, we have to copy a concurrence block template to the bottom of documents we are routing for concurrence. This block is not necessary, consumes staff time to prepare the block, and wastes at least one page of paper for every page that the block is copied on to. Instead, concurrence signatures can be captured without the concurrence block template as it has been for years.

We need to expand and strengthen the Regional Offices so they can better assist the States in carrying out their responsibilities in implementing air rules. The States are currently overwhelmed. We should also strengthen the compliance office so they can better assist the states.

See item 2 above. Note that the EPA regional offices are the point of contact for states, tribes, local communities, the regulated community, and the public at large.

The general public should have access to a state/community EPA liaison. A state/community EPA liaison for the general public will help connect the public to the services of the EPA and ensure their needs are being met.

Fewer "advisors" "consultants" and "policy analysts" at headquarters. Make more people accountable for actually producing environment results (regulations and regulation implementation).

We really don't need all of the space/building square footage to accomplish our mission. Instead, there should be more focus on the ability to telework in order to reduce the Agency's footprint.

Many of the software programs we use are not user friendly. Ones that come to mind are People Plus, the Interior FPPS system, Gov trip, and EAS. We should be able to do better. Note that the average person at EPA now spends a lot of time on their computers using various software. Time wasted dealing with bad software is time away from carrying out our mission and wastes taxpayers dollars.

SharePoint could be utilized further to increase staff efficiency and effectiveness; however, IT support and regional support for this platform is sub-par, at best.

No suggestions here.

I'm not sure that shared responsibility and mutual interest will be the most efficient. Instead, shared responsibility and mutual interest seems like it could lead to a lot of federal redundancy. The regional haze rule is an example of where there is federal redundancy...perhaps I just don't understand the question.

None come to mind

Region 8, along with one or two other regions, uses SharePoint to streamline our air state implementation plan (SIP) process to improve our efficiency and reduce costs. Region 8 uses SharePoint as a collaboration and concurrence platform to manage SIPs. There could be a national workshop to help other regions and HQ use SharePoint to process SIPs.

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1. Cumbersome electronic resources--Concur (for travel) and Webforms (for internal requests)--single sign on for any database accessed through our system would save time (and money). Travel policies should allow for lowest fares when staff knows they have to attend a conference or meeting (sometimes the cost savings are dramatic). Procurement procedures can take months for approvals. Purchase Card holders are held to such strict requirements, that few people are willing to "be responsible" for other branch purchases and cards cannot be used more than one month in advance--conferences often require payment for booth space up to 6 months prior to the conference. Follow-up and follow through create excessive productivity loss.
2. Streamlining approval processes--give supervisors authority to approve most staff requests. Flatten organization.
3. Clarify HQ Programs versus Regional Management--who runs the programs? For national continuity, it should be HQ Programs--therefore, regional management should focus not on programs but logistics, facilities, and ensuring HQ policies are followed.

I would get rid of the EPA travel agency and online booking system and just have people book their own travel claim back expenses as is done in the private sector. It is super confusing and uses up way too much FTE between the traveler, management, administrative assistant, and now a centralized help desk because now we're not even allowed to use it ourselves. 99% of the time, travelers can get better rates online which they should be able to do if a refundable fare is not required. The agency fees are completely ridiculous for what the service actually provides which IMO is just another level of bureaucracy and expense. Furthermore, why is a "no-cost" TA ever necessary?

EPA, states, and tribes should be using the same "play book." Nationalization of good, sound environmental policies should be considered. States and tribes need adequate staff to do the duties deferred to them; many states/tribes are very lean on staff. Our program works well with local governments.

Channeling more respect for the agency's mission in the public rather than economic interests AHEM SCOTT PRUITT so states, tribes, local communities, and the private sector are incentivized to work with us and actually believe we are going to follow through on promises instead of backing out due to lack of funding and whimsical reprioritization of commitments.

Better customer service comes from strengthening staff training--especially those that have never worked outside the federal government. As a former private-sector employee, attitudes regarding customer service are different for those that never have worked in a private sector position from those that have. "It's just the government way" is never a good response to a question as to why something is done a certain way. There is little credibility given to those of us that haven't been federal employees for our entire career. We could be very beneficial to streamlining effectiveness and efficiencies!

More grant funding with less red tape. Literally all that our stakeholders are interested in is money and technical assistance, so if we could actually provide that without enormous hurdles, that would go a long way. In terms of the public at large, see above comment re: channeling public respect for the important work that we have been doing for decades.

Biggest opportunity is forcing management out of their comfort zones and thinking creatively--how can this task be more cost effective and more efficient? Listen to former private-sector employees to assist in seeing the organization potential. Reorganization doesn't mean shifting "titles," it means doing business differently. It should mean removing (or moving) staff that is in the wrong position, it should result in visible change that makes our efforts stronger. We do a great job in protecting human health and the environment, we just aren't always doing it the most effectively. Part of that problem goes back to too many layers. (Sadly, too much military influence, "chain of command," top-down "orders" thwarts creativity and affects morale.)

Supporting money for research opportunities, either through ORD or grant funding. Research into new scientific techniques leads to increased efficiencies in environmental investigation in the future. Also, centralize EPA's contracting and staff it with people who actually know what they are doing.

We already have the new eDFS time reporting process in place that enables accurate time accountability for those of us that are using daily flex schedules. It captures our time to the minute. All staff members should be accountable for their accurate time, as well. Staff member that work straight 40 hour workweeks, still should account for 40 hours and those using compressed work schedules should be held accountable for the nine-hour days that they have agreed to work...often staffers are someone lax in working their full schedule--coming in a few minutes late or leaving early. Over the range of offices, that is thousands of dollars that the agency is not getting value for. All staff should be held accountable.

More use of real-time sampling techniques that would allow for quicker decision-making in the field.

Get rid of any paper-based HR processes.

Get a contractor to fix EAS, SharePoint, Concur, <<insert any other electronic system here>> to make the systems more user-friendly so people will actually use it without their heads exploding.

The government has allowed mission creep, making working with other agencies more difficult. Once there is less duplication of responsibility, working together will become easier. Hand-offs and collaboration will be required for all agencies to provide the best customer service to our states, tribes, local communities and private sector. Now there is little need to work together.

Sponsor interagency conferences to educate all stakeholders on the latest environmental research so staff is up-to-date and there is no duplication of effort. Oh wait, that might cost a tiny bit of money and therefore it will never be done.

Flatten organizations to allow access and interaction between staff and management. Allow for creativity and free-flowing exchange of ideas. Avoid a military-like atmosphere. Expect staff to be responsible and hold them accountable. In the private sector, staff members were allowed to do their jobs and take responsibility for their actions--if they failed, they lost their jobs. If they succeeded, they were rewarded. We allow far too many to drag our progress down by lack of accountability. Friends and family hiring practices also need to be reviewed. Private-sector best practices--if a process gets in the way of progress, it's the process that needs to be revised, not the timeline of progress.

The private sector has MUCH MUCH better administrative technology systems.

Reduce barriers to overtime, or better yet, comp time (a zero cost way to have employees work more when they need to, and take off when they need to).

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EPA needs to speak as one voice that our main mission is to protect human health and the environment. Enforcement will proceed to ensure uniform standards are maintained, and that no one will get a competitive advantage from polluting.

In certain areas within EPA there are teams with less than 5 people with a team leader and then a program manager with less than 20 people. In those situations I don't see the real need for a team leader position which could also serve as a cost savings... Also in certain instances contractors are paid for work that could ultimately be done by a student intern however EPA no longer has a paid (or otherwise) intern program - if this was established such work could be done much cheaper and benefit entry level workforce.

States need to be held accountable to ensure national standards.

We are already partnering a lot with our states and local communities through constant communication and outreach of baseline conditions, work being done, getting input from community through implementation. I can also see including the private sector when applicable (as in owned or operated property nearby or impacted by certain assessment or clean-up activities) but involving the private sector has no relevance if this is not the case.

Outreach to such groups regularly and often - this is nothing new to us we do it all the time and treat all members with respect and as part of our team/project.

Eliminate the matrix in ORD. The structure creates two forms of management (L/C/O and NPD), which are sometimes duplicative and conflicting.

The superfund remedial process is extremely process driven and as such many RPM's appear highly process driven as well, and very driven by contract support. That program could be re-evaluated to determine what steps could be streamlined. These clean-ups are also very costly due to the huge reporting requirements and contractor costs of preparing such reports. Why couldn't this be evaluated and tailored more like some parts of the removal program. Recommend analyzing each different step in the process for possible streamlining and also allowing and encouraging staff to think innovatively to save time, resources and funding .

Continued and expanded use of Internet. EPA must publish all data, especially climate change data, to ensure efficiency.

We are currently evaluating innovative field methods to streamline sampling and assessment processes.

States need to be held accountable to ensure national standards.

Definitely combining areas of expertise such as contracts and grant support would save costs. Many scientists and engineers are required to know extensive knowledge of grants and contracts which takes away project support and takes more time since such activities are not everyday activities...

We are currently evaluating innovative real-time field methods to streamline sampling and assessment processes.

1. Dealing with serious employee performance problems. The federal system makes it extremely labor intensive and difficult to address serious performance problems. Entire books have been written about how to fire a federal employee with serious performance problems. That alone speaks volumes. While we must have a system that is fair to employees, it should be revised to make the system less labor intensive to address serious performance problems. The current system is a deterrent to managers addressing these problems, which ultimately prevents the agency from accomplishing its mission efficiently.

2. EEO reform. The EEO process, in which employees allege discrimination by the agency, is in need of revision. It's extremely important to have an effective EEO program, to remedy the very serious matter of discrimination. However, the vast majority of EEO complaints are from unhappy employees seeking an avenue to address their grievances, and don't concern discrimination. The pendulum has swung too far. We need to act decisively in the small minority of cases when discrimination has occurred, as discrimination is unacceptable. But the vast majority of these cases are frivolous, and the agency expends substantial amounts of agency time to process them. The system should be reformed.

Our financial management system, Compass, does not have expanded features activated in its current configuration to allow funds tracking below the Laboratory/Center/Office level within the Office of Research & Development (ORD). As a result, ORD uses a separate system, Integrated Resources Management System (IRMS) to track these costs to a more detailed organizational or work breakdown level. IRMS requires separate data entry from information residing in COMPASS and frequently data entry errors occur. If EPA were to purchase the expanded COMPASS funds tracking modules, IRMS would not be required. Data would be entered and tracked to the lower organizational levels and actual expenditures against these resources would be automatically updated in COMPASS. This effort would save significant time and resources for the Agency. It would also streamline the functional requirements for funds execution. Implementing this upgrade should free up administrative resources that could be applied to current urgent needs.

EPA currently maintains library access to its employees and the public based upon a 1971 policy. The electronic resources available from this interface are impressive and extensive, with a great deal of attention being placed on improving the software interface. However, EPA also maintains "brick and mortar" libraries at each of its facilities for its employees and the public. For example, sites such as the Robert S. Kerr Environmental Research Center in Ada, OK, is required to maintain access to a "brick and mortar" library for the general public. These libraries require funds to operate them, typically through on-site contractors. They also have footprint costs associated with them for utilities, rent and accessibility. It is recommended that the policy to have "brick and mortar" libraries be evaluated and if these are not required by law to do away with or, if required by law, investigate significantly consolidating these facilities. The resources saved through this effort could be used to help supplement the current electronic file access for the public

SharePoint and OneDrive have had great positive effects on Agency organizations committed to their use. In certain organizational elements, use of SharePoint has reduced the amount of email by over 50 percent. Continued application and expansion of these software platforms can only continue to enhance our capabilities.

The burden of mandatory on-line training classes is growing. Does anyone count up the agency wide people-hours needed for a new 30-minute class? [0.5 hours x 15,000 employees = 7,500 hours of agency time] Some of the information provided in these classes is arcane, unnecessary and won't be retained by most people. Each of these classes should be scrutinized to distill the information down into what is most needed and most likely to be retained - with the goals of making the trainings more effective and saving agency time.

In thinking of partnerships in a voluntary context, I'm concerned for EPA's voluntary programs which have all been targeted for defunding in FY18. Most (all?) EPA voluntary partnerships rely on a solid business case to demonstrate the economic effectiveness of the targeted actions - and, of course, those actions also yield positive environmental results. However, there are always barriers (uncertainties, lack of upfront capital, simple inertia, etc) to convincing folks to take those actions which will save them money over time and yield positive environmental results. When EPA can bring something of value to the table (e.g., funding, site-specific tailored technical support), we can sometimes help overcome those barriers. EPA's voluntary programs need MORE funding not less. Most businesses like (or are neutral) about our voluntary partnerships.

EPA needs more sophisticated teleconferencing options: The EPA organizer of a large group conference call should have the ability to mute all lines and/or drop any lines which place the call on hold.

Separately but related, why do phone lines placed on hold play music? Can EPA drop this feature?

The deadline for staff entering information into PeoplePlus is typically the second-Thursday except the timeperiods when there is a holiday and the deadline is moved to the second-Wednesday. Why not just make the normal deadline the second-Wednesday? This eliminates confusion and the need to send special announcements about the accelerated deadline 10+ times per year.

INTERNALLY: The process for the overnight use of a GOV should be electronic and streamlined. Leadership sign off should be electronic, like leave slips. If the GOV is being requested for a meeting that is 4 hours away (in 1 direction) what is the purpose for explaining why the use of the GOV is in the best interest of the government? The request form should be adjusted/edited so that the data supplied is clear and needs no further explanation.

EXTERANALLY: The changes to 40 CFR Part 170 need:

Time extension for outreach and compliance assistance with impacted stakeholders;

financial resources dedicated SOLELY to the states--STAG funds for materials and training & associated expenses

EXTERNALLY: The proposed changes to 40 CFR Part 171 need to be eliminated, and could be replaced with:

financial STAG resources for tribes & states to evaluate their programs, identify areas that need adjustments, and support, both financial as well as expertise to make changes as the tribes & states & their stakeholders identify.

Program results should be reflective of the program--and should be agreed upon with partners. Largely, program results are determined in at the HQ level. Requests for comments are made--but it is rare to see the comments and suggestions made actually put in place. Hours & hours are spent developing comments on proposed grant guidance, measures, reg changes, etc. yet, rarely do we see the huge efforts made reflected in the final product. Field staff are in a very helpful position to provide valuable data and perspective--as well as what will work given the present status--and yet, they are largely unheard. Preferably, there'd be a few measures that were agreed upon; versus a slew of measures that are not well understood, and may be subject to misunderstanding. Those on groups that develop program measures for results should be made up of a cross section of the nation--not the same group members for many years running--with a diversity of state size and demographics.

To attend meetings or events with stakeholders--tribes, states, industry, etc. we are required to provide an agenda 2 weeks in advance. MOST times, we receive the meeting notice a week or even a day before the event--and as a result are not able to participate. This hampers communication, effective partnerships, and fails to support effective grant and cooperative agreement management. Additionally, in most circumstances--these events provide valuable professional development opportunities to EPA staff--which are nonexistent and have been the last 10 plus years. It's impossible to maintain effective partnerships when you're not allowed to interface with partners. It's also hard to provide timely and pertinent program support and guidance when attendance is not permitted at related informational meetings and trainings--that are no cost to minimal cost for attendance expenses.

Web site is very hard to navigate for the public, partners--such as states and tribes--and stakeholders. The web page is identified as a resource but it's hard to navigate and is not well targeted to various user communities. Not all users have effective broadband access, and have to use cell service. We need to ensure that web pages can be viewed by mobile device users as well as those with access to other hardware options. Many stakeholders still need and want paper copies of guidance materials. Despite requests--largely, other formats of very needed compliance & outreach materials were deemed unnecessary. This is NOT the case in the field, however, nor the request/perspective of deeply impacted stakeholders.

As mentioned in Q 1, above, the overnight GOV process is cumbersome, and inefficient. For stakeholder outreach--electronic resources are great--but have to be tempered with the stated needs of deeply impacted stakeholders--tribes, states and the regulated community. Electronic efforts can be very beneficial/wonderful--but must reflect the communications capacity of various parts of the nation. The efforts themselves need to be clear and targeted--ideally, stakeholders would be queried as to what they'd USE and the FORMAT that works best for them. There seems to be a lot of interest in developing "apps" but not everyone has access to "smart" technology--and if the app is seeking input or data from users, who is collating and distributing app data?

As mentioned in Q 3 above, there are opportunities to align activities--and in the past, that was accomplished to varying degrees, but the last 6 years or so--it's been impossible to attend events where mutually beneficial endeavors took place.

Ideally, each EPA office identifies their areas of direct responsibility and those that are "peripheral"--and identify who are primary as well as possible peripheral partners, as well as the status of partnerships. It's likely that many partnerships that had been established in early 2000, are no longer--or are attached via a thread. Staffing changes may bring those unfamiliar with the various partners and relationships that were active. This unfamiliarity can lead to misunderstanding and poor support that appears to have no impact, initially. However, when there are program based changes, and support is needed--the relationship is frayed or broken.

There is value in staff having opportunities to work on special projects or details; and staff development and engagement is very important to the organization. However, before staff is able to pursue other efforts--the impact to the rest of the unit or group must be assessed. Especially when certain staff have had multiple occasions to pursue other career opportunities, and the others left must cover the rest of the workload. Minimally, some type of assessment determining how many details or special project opportunities staff is eligible to participate in and the impacts to the work load of the unit or group is needed. This assessment is a way to determine accountability, impacts to staff and clients and efficiency.

994 5/15/2017

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I just started December 2016. Getting access to different programs has been challenging, but I do understand the need for safety.

Overall Issue: Current OECA program and individual performance measures are not designed to encourage and support state compliance actions or joint EPA-state partnerships.

1] Change OECA program measures to incentivize state collaboration:

A] Start counting as a success all state and federal enforcement and compliance assistance efforts (for delegated programs).

- Current measures** can act as a deterrent to effective state partnerships.

[**current measures of program success only measure ???formal?? federal enforcement actions. No consideration is given to state actions nor progress from any compliance assistance efforts.]

-Do not prioritize and ???count?? formal federal enforcement actions over state efforts and successful non-enforcement compliance measures.

B] Do not require a minimum number of federal inspections in the different programs. Also, do not differentiate between investigations [which may be performed at the office] and site inspections. [this is consistent with most states and prevents duplication of effort]

C] Eliminate OECA's Nationally Significant case reviews /screenings. This review frequently results in the lack of timeliness and impacts real-time discussions with states.

2] Modify OECA/Regional manager ???individual?? performance criteria to encourage EPA-State compliance efforts

-current performance ratings system incentivizes large federal cases; state compliance activities ignored

-rating system does not measure/track or encourage strategic state or joint EPA/state successes

-rating system does not recognize/track or reward our assistance with state-only compliance efforts

I do not have an issue right now

More staff, but that cost money.

N/A at this time for me.

I am sure there are. I am just trying to get up to speed on what I need.

I do not know this one yet.

I am not, but I am more than sure there are several.

For all of our actions that are required to be published in the Federal Register, we should consider if the benefits of publishing there outweigh the costs; if not, we should revise our laws/policies so that we may publish on our website instead. The public does not go to the Federal Register to learn about what we're doing, they go to our website. Not only do we pay by line for documents published in the FR, but the process to get things published is burdensome. At the least, we should shorten what is published in the FR and point the public to our website or the docket for further information. For example, when we publish final rules for pesticide tolerances, the FR not only includes the new pesticide tolerances (this is necessary) but there is also a narrative regarding the human health implications of the new tolerances. This second piece is unnecessary to publish in the FR; it requires rewriting/summarizing information that is already found in our human health risk assessments (this can lead to inadvertent mistakes when rewriting the information and it requires many levels of review before publishing, which wastes time). At the least, I suggest we publish the tolerances in the FR then point the reader to the docket where the risk assessments are kept.

We spend a lot of time in meetings, many of which are unnecessary or inefficient. Many times meetings are scheduled back to back and therefore attendees arrive late as they're coming from another meeting that ends at the exact time the next meeting begins. In addition, many meetings we have are used for updates, not for productive discussions or the creation of action plans. I suggest we make it our standard that meetings are either 25 minutes (instead of 30) or 45 minutes (instead of 60), and we really make an effort to stick to those times. I also suggest that our policy be that update-style meetings are replaced by email updates. Finally, all meetings should have an agenda more extensive than something like, Introductions, Updates, Next Steps. Perhaps an agency-wide training on running successful meetings would help kick off a new paradigm.

Finally, any requirement or encouragement to work in paper instead of electronically should be abolished. This could take the form of changing our regulations to not require paper submissions or having management strongly discourage printing out documents instead of reviewing them electronically. When there are documents that need review, comments should only be accepted electronically.

When many people work on the same types of actions, inconsistencies can easily occur without staff realizing it. There should be an easy mechanism for the regulated community to bring these inconsistencies to our attention, be it a standardized electronic form or otherwise. The inconsistencies should be addressed internally as soon as possible, the person pointing out the inconsistency should be informed of the action taken to correct that inconsistency, and the decision should be electronically stored somewhere for future use.

Having worked under several Administrations, I regret to note that this is thus far the most dysfunctional political team that I have worked with in almost 15 years with the Agency. Any change in administration offers the opportunity to infuse new ideas and energy into a bureaucracy that tends to turn slowly; however, rather than embracing this opportunity to work with career staff to evolve the Agency from the ground up, the Trump political team seems to prefer a more insular approach whereby Administrator Pruitt and his staff converse primarily with fellow politicals and external stakeholders instead of generating dialogue and sharing ideas with career staff. This is increasing a frustrating environment to work in and across multiple program offices, I continue to hear the refrain that this Administration does not care to seek input from career staff and indeed, actively keeps information from career staff. This survey is a start, but far more impactful would be if the Administrator and his political staff started actively engaging career staff by taking more meetings on pressing issues, by communicating early and often on rollouts related to regulations and key Agency initiatives, by taking other steps to become a functioning part of the bureaucracy rather than remaining aloof outsiders. While this dynamic might be working for the political team now, I can promise you that come the first inevitable environmental emergency, both the political team and the career staff (not to mention the American public) will regret not having established a better and more productive rapport between career EPA staff and the political team.

Or since this Administration seems to prefer straight talk over "PC" communication, for the love of all that's good and decent, please get the Administrator's team to remove its head from its ass and start communicating with EPA staff. That would just be better for everyone, but especially EPA staff morale and ultimately, the American people. It's time to face the news: You're not in OK anymore folks, and you no longer just work for the oil and gas industry or your own ego(s). EPA staff are professionals and are practiced at working with different administrations -- take advantage of that experience. Right now, the political team is seems to be actively fostering an unnecessarily unhealthy and adversarial relationship with staff. That needs to change and the onus is now on Pruitt's staff to reach out.

Well, I'm not sure how much control the Administrator or members of his team have over Trump or Mulvaney, but a good start would be to stop threatening budget cuts that, if enacted, will degrade both existing relationships with states, tribes, local communities, the private sector and EPA AND expose the American public to health threats.

Offer our hardworking support staff -- especially our contracting officers-- a more appealing career ladder here at EPA. Especially with looming budget cuts, we'll increasingly rely on contractors and we need to retain knowledgeable and experienced contracting professionals. Without offering attractive compensation for their expertise, our talent will continue to leave for other agencies.

Please for the love of God drop the patently false narrative about the existence of anthropogenic climate change being up for debate. It's not -- the evidence is irrefutable and now it's up to entities like EPA to show leadership so that future generations can enjoy the same stable environment that we have now. To say claim anything else makes you either a liar or a fool or both.

We need all hands on deck to address climate change and the Trump/Pruitt team could make an indelible mark on history by offering a conservative solution to climate change -- one that creates a productive relationship with other federal agencies and states (and yes, private industry too). Right now, this Administration has its head in the tar sands and is setting itself up to look like near-sighted villains who ignored the inevitable call to action on climate change in favor of short-term and entirely selfish gains.

998 5/15/2017

999 5/15/2017

Timekeeping requires a tremendous amount of time from staff, managers and timekeepers. While our flexible work schedule is a big benefit-and one we should keep to ensure EPA remains an employer of choice-we need to ensure the electronic systems that support our work schedules are as efficient as possible. Suggest evaluating possible improvements.

The importance of the administrative function cannot be underestimated. It is much more efficient for there to be administrative staff finalizing (formatting/packaging) and mailing documents than to have staff at a much higher pay grade spending their time doing this work.

Working with each state individually on where they can best use their limited resources and where EPA can be of most assistance-this will vary by state and by env program. Then clearly communicate to state and EPA staff and the public what our respective roles are. Local communities-especially small community drinking water and wastewater systems-joint effort with EPA, state env and health agencies, USDA Rural Development, HUD CDBG, engineering organizations, developing operator training)possibly thru Brownfields Job Training, community colleges, other job training programs incl in urban areas to provide jobs to the unemployed) and private financial resources to evaluate community needs and develop cost-effective solutions. In some cases it could be reducing water consumption to allow a discharging lagoon to be a no discharge lagoon, the drinking water options may be limited, but the bottom line is there are many very small communities-incl trailer parks and homes associations (less than 500 people) that do not have safe drinking water or may have failing septic tanks causing water quality or human health issues. This is a national issue much bigger than EPA and the state env agencies.

Use of technology and holding parties accountable.

States: It is necessary for EPA to insure states are accomplishing their objectives and it is imperative that EPA hold states accountable. It is likely that EPA may need to partner with them in order to meet objectives but there must also be an oversight role to ensure objectives are met.

Clear, easy to access education information about water and energy conservation, proper pesticide application, the importance of proper renovation of lead paint (impacts of lead exposure from paint and lead mine waste on children), protecting water quality-what citizens, cities and farmers can do, flood and/or drought preparation for citizens and communities incl dw and ww infrastructure, pesticide worker protection standards for immigrant farm workers. Basically what everyone can do to protect the environment.

more interaction, education and information

Re-evaluate the many small grant programs and eliminate or consolidate to larger grants. Grants management requirements at EPA are very burdensome for the recipient and for EPA staff that manage the grants so very small grants have more transaction costs associated with them than the value of the grant. Unfortunately some grantees don't follow the rules which requires us to document and ask for grant funds to be returned to EPA. Conduct state oversight in a more streamlined focused way acknowledging good work of states and recommended improvements without lengthy reports (unless there are significant recurring issues).

technology: use of electronic reporting, electronic communication

It would require states to use technology more/better. If the states use technology more we can use technology more. Their lack of use of technology can at times impact our use/efficiency.

States already utilize our resources on technically/policy challenging permits and inspections/enforcement cases where states have not had success or where "politically" state cannot take an action. In addition, in each state there are aspects of delegated programs where states cannot do the work due to resource constraints and rely on EPA to do this work. This needs to be a continuing coordination/communication effort with the states as both state and EPA budgets are constrained.

There are many ongoing communication/coordination efforts between regions and states that are best practices that should be shared and continued. EPA HQ could work with ECOS to poll the states for their perspectives on what works/doesn't-what could be built upon and shared.

LEAN

1000 5/15/2017

1001 5/15/2017

Please re-evaluate employee's grades every 3-5 years. All too often at EPA someone is promoted because they are doing a great job then they retire in place. There are many highly graded employees doing low-graded work now, but our culture doesn't force them to accept lower salary for the easier work. Why is it once-in, always-in? You should continually earn your check. Managers say that only an employee can ask for a desk audit. We should change that. Managers should be able to show that their employee is not performing at proper GS level and downgrade them. In all of my years I have NEVER seen anyone downgraded.

It has been extremely difficult doing my job effectively because the Shared Service Center has been very short-handed over the past few years. We work as partners but I would say that their ineptness and lack of staff has really been an obstacle here in the Region. Also, I see a huge problem from a technology standpoint. I feel that the more basic the systems are more cost-efficient, effective, and easy to implement and learn. We keep spending money on newer, more complex technology before the field can even learn and become proficient at the older technology. This has been a constant problem since we went to One EPA. Currently, FPPS cannot talk to PPL+ which has caused numerous problems in pay, leave balances, etc. This adversely impacts employee morale and productivity.

Not applicable to what I do...

Not applicable to what I do...

Adding qualified staff at the SSC levels would help us do our job more effectively and timely. This has an indirect effect on the morale and productivity of the technical staff in the field.

Yes, please. Please evaluate both of the systems OCFO has purchased in recent years - PeoplePlus and CONCUR. They are both reducing productivity greatly.

I feel that the more basic the systems are more cost-efficient, effective, and easy to implement and learn. We keep spending money on newer, more complex technology before the field can even learn and become proficient at the older technology. This has been a constant problem since we went to One EPA. FPPS cannot talk to PPL+ which has caused numerous problems in pay, leave balances, etc. This problem adversely affects the morale and productivity of employees in the field.

Perhaps streamline IT and HR systems so that every agency uses the same. For instance, not all agencies use the same payroll systems, the same HR LoB systems, etc.

Not personally. However, we should be looking at other agencies to see what works best. I think we need to slow down with the constant technology changes here at the EPA. They are expensive, difficult to implement, and not easy to learn. I'm not a fan of making change just for the sake of making change. If it's not broke, then don't fix it. Not a fan of the changes implemented since One EPA. Don't like HR LoB at all. What works for other agencies??

1002 5/15/2017

1003 5/15/2017

- Prior to an inspection two and most likely three documents (HASP, car reservation and TA/over-night-form) have to be generated and signed by a supervisor. It would be nice if this was one system with one signoff.
- Other than the signoff sheet, Evalu

I don't have anything to share on this one.

Shared data (easily accessible) would be the most important first step.

Ensure STAG (State Tribal Assistance Grants) funds are monitored better (progress reports are submitted, show progress, etc.) and reduce funding for non-performers. Give more money to outstanding grantees. State formulas for funding don't take in to consideration successful progress or lack of progress on env. outcomes.

The Compliance Assistance Teams should be transitioned to be Customer Service Staff.

Follow the EPA R10 example and have a field office in every state of the Region. Get more EPA folks out to the local state/tribe more frequently this way to assist technically and monitor progress. Field office staff are paid less in locality pay, generally, and have lower travel costs to visit grantees so are a cost savings to the Agency.

More image analysis and data mining should be implemented in targeting facilities for EPA attention.

I think the field office model would reduce costs and be an efficient way to get env. protection improvements at the local level. I think we need to focus our FTE and outreach on the Statutes (Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, CERCLA, etc.) we have to enforce and implement. This work should be primary and is our mission from Congress. Other work and programs should be secondary to this work. If an employees work cannot be quantified and measured and tied to our core Statue work then we need to rethink that position and its importance/relevance. Reassign folks in to our core mission work fields - permit writers, inspectors, compliance assistance, grant Project Officers, Remedial project manager, etc.

When you want to popularize environmental ideas the media should be a major player. EPA should be regularly creating films, videos, and articles for print.

We need to be using some type of email archiving on a daily basis. At least in my Region we have been told not to use this due to some litigation.

An entire liaison corps should be formed and imbedded into other federal agencies.

Return the State and Tribal Clean Water Act Section 319 to the USDA's NRCS EQIP program. Does basically the same thing and the NRCS agents are better educated and trained in agricultural practices and are more locally situated than EPA staff and project officers. We've been putting a lot of money out thru states/tribes under the CWA Section 319 without much water quality improvements to show for it. Time to stop this program.

EPA should be a more active player in holding regional conferences.

I'm not aware of any.

1004 5/15/2017

1005 5/15/2017

5-tiered PARS system for rating employee performance -- this system has too many categories and creates extra work for supervisors, with no benefit to the organization.

solution: change PARS to a 3-tier rating system -- minimally satisfactory, fully successful, exceeds expectations

- a) set annual targets for EPA, states and tribes to conduct "X" number of process improvements
- b) provide funding (beyond the Exchange Network grants) for modernizing and streamlining our products and services
- c) expand formal and informal agreements that allow use of citizen science data to compliment core program work (e.g., long-term water quality monitoring to show improvements)

states and tribes: invite early engagement and input on EPA priorities, goals, objectives and annual commitments.
States and tribes: identify joint priorities and work together to achieve results
have dedicated EPA liaisons an
regulated community: fund EPA Portal that allows more business and services to be provided on-line
public: increase transparency of EPA data, information and gather public feedback on EPA priorities, then share results
with public before and after decisions are made

set goal of transferring and replicating "game changing projects" that modernize and streamline the way EPA, states and tribes deliver environmental protection. Fund good project ideas and then get other EPA regions, states and tribes to adopt them, where applicable, to realize the benefits.

expand use of software to compliment responding to citizen inquiries. e.g., analyze the most routine questions that EPA receives, then purchase and use software that searches for key words, finds solutions on internet, and provides email responses to these most common questions for EPA

look at success of HUD-EPA-DOT partnership for sustainable communities -- ability to leverage resources in defined geographic area and achieve more significant/meaningful results

Realigning EPA's Office of Research and Development (EPA-ORD) to DIRECTLY support the needs of EPA's program offices in DC would GREATLY increase efficiency, would do away with hundreds of HIGHLY-PAID managers, and would free-up numerous SES and Title 42 EXPENSIVE positions so that other parts of the Agency can use the SES'ers and Title 42's the way they were intended to be used by Congress!!!. Currently, ORD is organized by both "matrix management" and typical line management. The "matrix" manages the research programs, where the line managers manage the people. In many cases, the line managers in ORD are also managers of the matrix...it simply doubles their workload and is a giant waste of time. In reality, ORD is currently more like a compost pile, where all of the good compost and soil is at the bottom (in this case, the scientists are the good compost), but you can't see the good compost because all of the useless and plentiful leaves and grass clippings (managers) are sitting on top of the good soil (the scientists). WE NEED TO GET OXYGEN and moisture DOWN HERE TO DO OUR JOBS MOST EFFICIENTLY! PLEASE take off the many layers of the "dry leaves and grass clippings". The layers of "support divisions" are ripe for the picking as well. While the President is busy draining the Swamp in DC, let's get to work cleaning off the top of the EPA-ORD "compost pile" so the scientists finally get the chance to do their work DIRECTLY for the Program Offices in DC. Afterall, that is the entire reason we have an Office of Research and Development!!! So we can be truly UNBIASED and unaffected/unswayed by industry to improve the methods needed for PROPER regulation of industry. We are needed to create the best methods to both allow for industrial success AND protect the environment. It is long past sue time for an Administration to understand the purpose of science in all Agencies! Don't get me wrong, great science IS currently happening in ORD. The sad part is that a number of managers just keep building fiefdoms that drown out the science, they take away money that we need for research, and they hire more people to do nothing! The last person that did this, Lek Kadeli, increased the administrative burden onto the backs of the scientists to the extent that it truly affects the amount of science that can be accomplished. I do NOT believe it is a coincidence that Lek Kadeli went to work for the World Bank after he worked to DISORGANIZE EPA-ORD; it is all about preventing good science and promoting his Agenda 21-esque philosophy. He single-handedly is responsible for the poor organization in ORD, and all of my colleagues agree, no matter their position...all local line managers know this in ORD!!!

Personally, I'm with the President, I agree with the downsizing of EPA. It is out of control from the inside out!!! However, I see things from the inside so I KNOW why our science does not get the spotlight it deserves. We are highly successful in our careers as scientists, within each scientific discipline. However, when it comes to really making a

expand use of software to compliment the human element of responding to citizen inquiries.
e.g., analyze the most routine questions that EPA receives, then purchase and use software that searches for key words, finds solutions on internet, and provides email responses to these most common questions for EPA

Getting rid of "matrix management" in ORD would GREATLY improve efficiency. Many corporations used matrix management, and eventually those corporations got rid of matrix management because of how inefficient this management style causes delays and pitfalls in communication. We have the internet, we should be using THAT to communicate. We shouldn't have a group of Title 42's, GS-14s, and GS-15s acting in pseudo-management positions, traveling all over this country to have matrix management meetings. Every EPA location has video conferencing capabilities and internet. No excuse for this madness and yet ANOTHER layer of management. So, the BEST PRACTICE herein is learning that certain corporate management programs do not work! If we want to reorganize and run this organization like an efficient corporation, we MUST be aligned like a corporation (see answer to Q6).

1006 5/15/2017

1007 5/15/2017

- Create flexibilities in the workplace to get our work done. EPA needs to position itself to attract and maintain the talent by offering comparable benefits and work life balance that big business offers.
- Keep asking this question. EPA staff have great

- Invest and support E-Enterprise for the Environment. EPA is making great strides in modernizing our business practices and ways of interacting with co-regulators.
- Move to requiring mandatory electronic reporting to EPA.
- Support EPA's efforts with Ai

- Allow PCB permits, which EPA has to issue, to be delegated to the state when a concurrent RCRA permit is required.
- Consider changing the regulation of commercial Subtitle D landfills on tribal land ??? make EPA permitting and enforcement applicable to

CHALLENGE

U.S. EPA is building an integrated state plan submittal system called SPeCS (the State Plan Electronic Collection System) designed for state submittals needed to fulfill Clean Air Act (CAA) obligations. The SPeCS for SIPs Project is fulfilling the E-Enterprise goal of modernizing the business of environmental protection as it relates to management, tracking, and access to state implementation plans (SIPs) through their life cycle. An E-Enterprise SPeCS Integrated Project Team (IPT) was formed in 2015 comprised of headquarters, regional offices, and states to guide development of this shared system. In its July 2016 report, the IPT identified and prioritized recommendations for SPeCS to accept state implementation plan (SIPs) submissions and other Section 110 state plans including a dashboard for states and the public. With funding support from E-Enterprise and the U.S. EPA's Air Office, the agency is implementing the SPeCS team's recommendation for a fully integrated SIP management system, SPeCS for SIPs.

GOALS

The overall vision is to create an integrated electronic system for SIPs and other state plans that enables states and U.S. EPA to:

- Build SPeCS for SIP submissions;
- Manage state submissions more efficiently and effectively;
- Increase transparency through data availability;
- Encourage greater accountability of regulated entities and the government to the public; and
- Enhance collaboration among different levels of government.

RESOURCES

In moving forward, the SPeCS for SIPs Project is leveraging the expertise of various headquarters offices. In addition, the agency is harnessing Regional SIP expertise and Regional Counsel input to ensure that the system meets all users. Don't filter climate change science; maintain the integrity of peer review consistent with established practices in academia.

Investing infrastructure technology

Requiring electronic reporting to better manage and track CAA requirements

Adopt regulatory changes (already in draft at OCSPP) for PCBs in building materials (found in tens of thousands of buildings nationwide) to authorize their use so their existence doesn't trigger immediate non-compliance and potentially billions in extra cleanup costs.

E-Enterprise Projects
SPeCS for SIPs
Air Sensors

Reconsider RCRA BDAT determinations that require incineration (eg. PCBs) vs other technologies that are less expensive and still effective and do not create as significant air emissions or energy use

1008 5/15/2017

1009 5/15/2017

My regional supervisors are fabulous. The Oklahoma Flat Earthers (not geographically diverse, by the way) in charge of EPA now are preventing us from doing our job efficiently and effectively. Your lack of qualifications, disrespect for science, and industry conflicts of interest (and need for so many recusals) are truly appalling. EPA will be sued for everything you try to do and will lose. In the meantime, we will be bogged down with all these distractions from our job protecting humans and the environment. Pretty hypocritical for you to complain for years about EPA's mission creep and then to state publicly that Pruitt is going to bring back jobs. Please don't sully EPA with your immoral campaign.

The CONCUR travel software is overly complicated. Earlier travel systems were just as effective but were simpler to use.

Stop calling regulations that protect people and resources "job killers." It's dishonest and is not based in economic fact. Stop focusing on bringing back coal mining jobs - it's dying because of market forces, not regulations. Read the real (peer reviewed) economic statistics. While you're exercising mission creep by trying to bring coal jobs back to coal country (which is anathema to a free market ideology), let's bring the buggy whip industry back to upstate New York and the whaling industry back to Nantucket.

Providing the Regions and program Offices with more federal staff. In most cases, delays in providing high quality service to the states, tribes, local communities, or the private sector is a result of a lack of sufficient staff.

We can beef up our enforcement actions against polluters and not back down to the states who do not want us enforcing in their jurisdictions. States often do not have the power or the will to enforce against their industry friends, as you well know. Read Cynthia Giles' recent op-ed on why we cannot simply leave the enforcement to the states. She is spot-on. Region 5 EPA tried to be too nice to Michigan and the people of Flint suffered and will suffer for years. How did Michigan's GOP ideologues serve their citizens there?

Providing the Regions and program Offices with more federal staff. In most cases, delays in providing high quality service to the states, tribes, local communities, or the private sector is a result of a lack of sufficient staff.

STOP denying human-induced climate change. This will reduce costs by orders of magnitude in the long run. You are conservatives and should abide by the PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE. Remember how Big Tobacco tried snookering America for so many years long after we all knew that smoking causes cancer? Big Oil uses the same play book and it's shocking and embarrassing that the EPA is now led by non-scientists who are so easily snookered by Big Oil. If you were scientists, you would understand that we do not need to have all the answers to understand what can and should be done about climate change. Example: 9 out of 10 oncologists tell a smoker he has lung cancer and recommend the patient stop smoking and start chemo because the prognosis is good. The 10th doctor (who works for Big Tobacco) says we don't know exactly which chemical caused the cancer so can't prove that smoking is the culprit -- "the science isn't settled" -- so don't bother with chemo because...Why? Why would anyone choose to take advice from the 10th doctor? Required reading for anyone in Charge at the U.S. EPA: "Merchants of Doubt" by Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway.

Providing the Regions and program Offices with more federal staff. In most cases, delays in providing high quality service to the states, tribes, local communities, or the private sector is a result of a lack of sufficient staff.

How will we know if you allow millions of \$ to be reduced from our research budgets?
How will we know if you fire real scientists from the advisory boards?

I'm fairly satisfied with the Agency's ability to adopt new technologies for many aspects of our professional performance.

--Finalize the CERCLA 108(b) regulations to avoid future superfund sites by adopting strong financial assurance requirements for hard rock mines. Level the playing field so that the American taxpayers don't foot the bill for future cleanups. Do not make t

The Agency has evolved to be a organization with limited duplication. In areas where duplication appears to exist with other federal organizations, it is often not true duplication but areas where the two organizations compliment each other and result in greater efficiencies.

--Accounting for the Social Cost of Carbon is extremely important. You cannot ignore these costs. They are real and should be paid by the polluters -- this will reduce costs in the future. It's breathtaking that conservatives do not accept and apply this

The purchase card program is an effective tool for reducing the costs of making purchases. It should be expanded as much is logistically possible.

1010 5/15/2017

1011 5/15/2017

The Working Capital Fund (WCF) needs streamlining in some areas. The WCF is good for bulk purchases of items such as phones or computers. It does not work well for acquiring contracted services. In some cases, it takes many months to make contract modifications before a contractor can come on board to assist with a project. Once a mistake in billing is found, it can take over a year to correct the error. In one instance, the products described in eBusiness are out of date and misinform potential users of the current products available through the contract. I would suggest that the reason for these problems is that there are not enough resources (ie, qualified staff) dedicated to these activities. It is not so much that the procedures are no good, although significant streamlining might be in order, as there may not be enough resources to do the work in a timely manner. In any case, the WCF acquisition practices are a worthy of the Agency's attention.

- EPA's historic failure to invest in standardized record-keeping processes (especially for electronic records and non-records) creates an incredible back-side burden on employees who must respond to FOIAs or e-discovery requests.
- As a hiring official,

States need funding and training, particularly for enforcement and compliance activities. State inspectors are not well paid and they have a fairly high turnover rate. One suggestion is to insure that enough STAG funds are made available to state environmental programs to supplement states' appropriated funds. A suggestion regarding training is to ensure that state environmental agencies prioritize training, in particular enforcement and compliance training, in their Performance Partnership Grant Agreements. This will help to put training front and center. That will make it easier for EPA and states to partner on these training needs. There also needs to be more collaboration and sharing of training ideas and resources between EPA and the states to better leverage resources and to help states utilize their own resources to greater effect. Better training means better resource retention and greater capacity to ensure environmental compliance.

One opportunity would be to develop and utilize more virtual classroom training. We have tools for doing this, that is Adobe Connect. Virtual classroom training can reduce cost of travel and other expenses. For instance, it can bring in instructors from different locations and provide instructions to students in multiple locations without everyone being in the same room. It can go a long way to simulate a classroom experience and use a wide variety of learning techniques. We do need some better equipment such as microphones and digital cameras, and training in virtual classrooms. This could be of assistance to both EPA and states.

I would strongly suggest that EPA be allowed to purchase Apple iMac desktop and laptop computers -- equipped for our LAN system -- instead of the clunky Dell products that we now have. They operate much better and are much more reliable. EPA also has to improve the way it plans for its IT equipment needs. It takes years to get new and up to date equipment. We are often years behind the technology curve before new equipment arrives. We get new operating system upgrades before we get new equipment, which is extremely inefficient. In other words, better (ie, Apple products) and more efficient hardware acquisitions and roll outs.

- Provide supervisors with a one-stop shop for personnel information (e.g., current PD, past performance evaluations, prior award justifications and amounts, promotion history, resume, etc.) about their employees. Much of this information (though not all

It is not clear how much realignment is needed. The states have program delegation and authorization. One problem however, is that many of these agreements are old and out of date. They do not serve much purpose anymore. We could embark on a program to revise these agreements to better reflect the abilities of states to conduct their environmental work. On the other hand, this should not be an opportunity for states to throw off EPA oversight of their programs. It could be an opportunity to improve EPA oversight of state programs and ensure that EPA is doing the right job. It should not be an opportunity for states to overthrow required and EPA oversight. Additionally, the EPA enforcement program at OECA is not well designed for this. It would be helpful if OECA were organized for better performance and communications of its mission. One suggestion is to combine the Office of Civil Enforcement with the Office of Compliance. Reorganizations are difficult and more realignment than this might be in order, but this is the place to start. This would better align their core enforcement and compliance activities and provide an opportunity to update OECA's goals and objectives.

1012 5/16/2017

1013 5/16/2017

Filling out time cards prior to finishing the pay period is inefficient. It creates mistakes that then have to be fixed later on. Time cards should be submitted after the pay period is over, or at least, on the last Friday.

Our travel system, Concur, is very inefficient. On top of that, we are required to have a TA for any type of expense. So if I drive somewhere, and have to pay for parking, to get reimbursed, I have to have a TA, and the contractor gets a fee. The contractor fee is likely more than the cost of parking. The end result is that I don't request reimbursement for many travel expenses. We ought to go back to a petty cash fund for small travel expenses.

I have no issues with our requirements, procedures, or processes.

I feel like we do a great job of this already. More access to events that they all attend, which requires travel and training money would help. If we can't attend the events where they are talking about the latest in cutting edge technology, then we will not be keeping up. Also, the agency does not reimburse for memberships in professional organizations. So our membership in those organizations is low. There should be some way to allow employees to be more connected to the professional organization that others in the field belong to.

Good lines of communication are the key to success here. Regular conferences addressing specific topics as well as an internal EPA Champion for a given area.

More visibility and access. That means the ability to get out of the office more, because face to face interactions are some of the best.

Again, good communication and timely response to issues assigned are key to good customer service. Also, providing a go to person within EPA for the various groups is vital.

Filling retirement vacancies. We have a large percentage of people who are eligible to retire. Bringing in young people with great enthusiasm and energy, but working for a fraction of the cost, is a great way to continue our mission at a reduced cost.

Provide more opportunities at the GS-14 level. Currently there is a gap at the GS-14 level restricting highly qualified GS-13s from advancing to supervisor GS-15 positions.

Finding a better balance between cyber security and efficiencies would be a good start. There seems to be a great deal of inefficiencies built in to our IT resources that really slow the system down and make it difficult to work with. We have a number of technologies people don't use because of the inconsistency, lack of dependability, and difficulty built into them. I feel like the rest of the world is debating whether to use Google, Windows, or Apple and we are stuck in IBM.

Continue to develop and use virtual meeting technology beyond teleconferencing that the rank and file staff can use.

I feel like we do a pretty good job of partnering with other agencies and states. One example of an advantage the current system gives us is grants. There may be a number of grant programs for water and wastewater systems from different agencies. And some may think this is a duplication of effort. But every program has its own rules for its own reasons. Having different programs allows the utility to find the grant program that works best for its situation. If there was only one agency with grants, if it didn't work for you, you would be out of luck.

The big issue here is that we are not aware of what other agencies actually are doing or who to contact. Having an EPA Champion for specific interest areas who know what other agencies have and who to contact would provide a necessary link between the agencies and states.

In the Enterprise Quality Management Division we hold a monthly conference call with the entire EPA Quality Community. Ideas are exchanged, information is disseminated, and important issues are discussed. This has been an invaluable tool to keeping the lines of communication open at all levels of the community and demonstrating that EPA HQ is listening.

1014 5/16/2017

1015 5/16/2017

1016 5/16/2017

In general, the grant award process needs to be streamlined. There are far too many steps and far too many oversight tasks.

As a manager, I am waiting for the new leadership to reset the balance on the unions representing EPA employees. Union-Management partnership is one thing, but having federal employees working "full-time" on union business just should not be. SES members roll over to unions based on the previous administration deriving a strong base of support from government unions. Managers need a statement of support from the Administrator with respect to working with unions, and the SESers need the motivation (performance standards) to not choose the method of least resistance.

As a manager, I am waiting for the new leadership to reset the balance on the unions representing EPA employees. Union-Management partnership is one thing, but having federal employees working "full-time" on union business just should not be. SES members roll over to unions based on the previous administration deriving a strong base of support from government unions. Managers need a statement of support from the Administrator with respect to working with unions, and the SESers need the motivation (performance standards) to not choose the method of least resistance.

A simplified process for awarding funds to these organizations.

See answer to question 1.

1017

5/16/2017

Under the previous Administration, first line supervisors were repeatedly undercut by upper management eager to settle any EEO complaint without an Agency investigation. Poor performers being held to account only have to raise some allegation of discrimination or harassment knowing upper management will give them anything they want to make the complaint go away. There usually won't be a monetary award, but they will get their performance appraisal rewritten to a higher rating and/.or get reassigned to manager who won't care about their non-performance.

Managers need support from senior staff to not be sold out for a quick informal EEO settlement.

We need to get a better handle on processing FOIA's. We get a great number of them that eat up staff time that could be better spent on core work. Staff need to be trained in how to negotiate with requestors to narrow the scope of requests so that we may provide them with the information they need without reproducing every email with the word "and" in it. We need to be empowered to say "no" to unreasonable requests. We need to talk with requestors to really understand what they are seeking and tailor their request so we don't waste everyone's time. Also-many of our FOIA requests involve shared equities. We need other agencies, including the White House, to be just as responsive as we are.

We need a system to process Response to Comments that everyone at EPA can use. Right now, we have to contract separately with a vendor, who has to go out and purchase software to sort and collate comments. there has to be an EPA-wide system that could be used for all the program offices doing rule-making.

See FOIA comment

Clearly defining the roles that the federal government, states, tribes, local communities, the regulated community and the public play in environmental protection could allow each entity to do their jobs better. With clearly defined (and agreed upon) roles, a state would know when to seek input etc. from a federal agency, local community, etc. Likewise, the regulated community would know what their responsibilities are to meet state requirements, federal requirements, and their responsibilities for the public.

At EPA Headquarters, have all staff located in the same place. Staff are now split between Potomac Yards and Federal Triangle. Time is wasted traveling back and forth between locations when face-to-face meetings are needed. Housing all of us in the same place would eliminate the need for a shuttle service. Potomac Yard is a rented space; moving those staff to Federal Triangle in a GSA operated building may also save money.

Sometimes there is a sense of hostility when multiple agencies are working together. People spend more time focused on maintaining their territories rather than collaborating to meet a common goal. I'd recommend taking actions to foster a "One U.S. Government" attitude with our federal partners. We need a similar understanding with states (i.e., we all have the same interests so let's work together). By doing these things, we lay the ground work for collaborations, sharing responsibilities, and accomplishing more together.

1020 5/16/2017

1021 5/16/2017

The Concur Travel system is very challenging, and a more streamlined system or better support would be extremely helpful for travelers.

The chain of command for doing external work is highly burdensome, as all external messaging requires lengthy internal deliberations. This stems from the political climate always surrounding EPA. Working harder to highlight the positive impact our agency makes, not on "the environment" (which many take to mean useless worms and the like), but on measurable human health impacts would go a long way. Working to strengthen the message that EPA is realistically more of a "Human Health Protection Agency" than anything else would ease much of the burdensome chain of command that all messaging currently goes through.

The threat of constant shutdown is highly disruptive, and prevents us from doing our job efficiently.

Unify and create universal procedures for all sections instead of each section having their own individual procedures

My work is primarily with Tribes (and local communities), and Tribes benefit greatly from partnering with EPA. EPA is crucial in offering technical expertise and helping Tribes to grow their capacity for managing environmental statutes in the best interest of the Tribe (with Tribal members being some of our most vulnerable citizens in the United States). This crucial Federal Trust responsibility can be supported with more resources, especially in our Tribal and Grants Management programs. Tribes suffer when their Project Officers and Grants Management Officers are juggling 15 different grants, with limited resources and support systems.

EPA is also crucial in working with local communities. We are uniquely positioned to bring other agencies to the table, including Federal, State/Tribal, and Local, especially in vulnerable communities facing a number of environmental and other stressors. Additionally, a lack of support from communities can cause large setbacks in projects that EPA and other agencies are working on. The largest obstacle to working more effectively with communities is travel funding and EPA staff availability (based on high workloads currently).

Finally, my experience working with State environmental agencies is that they greatly appreciate EPA support - in some cases, State regulatory agencies are not supported politically to do the work that they know is right, and to support communities trying to raise their kids in a healthy environment. Those states appreciate EPA being able to be "the bad guy" and step in and do the right thing, and communicate that appreciation at a staff level.

need better communication with everyone involved. Especially better written permits that can be enforced upon.

The biggest obstacles to providing better customer service are: technology, workload, and levels of review:

- EPA technology is perpetually 15 years behind the private sector. EPA could provide much better customer service with better platforms and technology to interface with the public. This includes higher quality website, the ability to use social media, and hardware such as tablets to support our challenging work in the field.
- In order to make this effort successful, staff must have time to spend on prompt customer service. We also must have adequate resources in our tech support group, which is often overwhelmed at their current staffing level.
- Currently, EPA's outward facing message is tightly held, because of fear of backlash from our communication efforts. This hampers us in "telling our story" about the meaningful work that we do. When EPA takes an action that saves 1000's of kids from suffering from asthma, we need to be able to tell that story, in "conventional" media as well as social media.

fine tune processes to prevent enforcement actions from dragging on

EPA can prioritize and focus our energy even more on the most vulnerable communities that need our assistance, in order to truly achieve "environmental protection for all Americans". Our Environmental Justice program has made great strides in identifying communities that bear the greatest environmental burdens, and identifying opportunities for our various programs to collaborate and share resources in working with those communities. Our greatest opportunities for efficiency is strengthening our collaboration and efforts in our most vulnerable communities, where our work makes the greatest impact. This must be paired with continued work at the HQ levels to put protections in place for those communities.

close smaller offices and in-bed them with there state counterparts.

EPA needs support to access and use existing technologies - for example, all field staff should have field phones and tablets, to assist with complicated site assessments. These technologies should be streamlined for efficient record management, so that all field notes are captured in the record system. We need additional GIS and tech support for these technologies as well.

EPA plays a unique role in protecting Americans from the effects of pollution, and ensuring that all Americans are able to raise their children in a healthy environment. Even where EPA has shared responsibility, our expertise and mission are unique, and need to be supported and continued.

get everyone on the same page with better communication and enforcing the regulations in a consistent way. Permits need to be written clearly and the amount that is emitted should be reduced as new technology becomes available.

We need a better record management system that is much more streamlined for staff. Something as simple as an option to "save as record" rather than "save as", that brings that document into the records management system. The same is needed for our email system. This would make our response time to FOIAs and to other inquiries much faster, and would create huge efficiencies in staff time, with associated cost savings.

The continued hiring freeze imposed by the Administrator and the limit to total EPA employees of 15,000 imposed by congress's CR prevent me from doing my job efficiently. Myself and many of my coworkers are covering the duties of multiple employees because we can not backfill current vacancies. The Administrator should lift the hiring freeze and request congress to remove the employment cap for EPA. Also, the Administrator should request an increase in our annual budget from congress in order to fill current and future vacancies.

EPA's annual budget should be increased so that we can distribute more grants to states, tribes, and local governments. I work in a regional office, so I have observed first hand and I have had conversations with our state and tribal governments in which they expressed the need for continued and increased funding for state programs. Many positions at many state governments rely solely on EPA funding. Without continued and increased funding to state governments, environmental programs mandated by federal and/or state laws will not be implemented, threatening the local health and environment of our states and tribes.

We need to increase funding for our Regional offices. Regional offices are the front lines of customer service for the public, state, and local governments. Headquarters develops and establishes federal rules and regulations. But the implementation of these rules and regulations are carried out by EPA Regional offices and state governments. Without sustained and increased funding to Regional offices and states, laws, rules, and regulations will not be implemented and enforced as efficiently as possible.

EPA should stop publishing all State Implementation Plans (SIP), Consent Decrees (CD), and Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) in the Federal Register. This is a waste of limited EPA resources and it makes the number of publications in the FR by EPA seem large relative to other federal agencies. These orders do not need to be published in the FR to have the force of law if they are violated; the existing environmental statutes grant EPA its authority to implement and enforce orders. Further, the amount of FR publications from EPA makes locating relevant national rules and regulations on Regulations.gov very difficult. By reducing FR publications by no longer publishing orders, the regulated community will be able to more easily locate national EPA rules and regulations.

EPA's adoption of newer technologies, such as shorter refreshes of IT resources like laptops, tablets, and smartphones will continue to enable us to do our jobs more efficiently. The Agency's accelerated adoption of newer IT hardware and software should continue; this has greatly improved our efficiency. The Agency's continued development of online databases for information submission and retrieval by the regulated community should continue and should receive more funding. Online database services reduce time and costs for the regulated community.

Interagency committees that coordinated national programs between federal agencies should continue to be utilized to increase collaboration between agencies. Further, Agency advisory boards and panels, such as the BOSC and SAB, should continue to rely on impartial researchers from academia to advise EPA regarding the most recent and relevant scientific consensus on environmental topics. Industry representatives have no place on boards or panels that advise the Agency and should not be considered for these positions due to their clear conflict of interest. Also, academic researchers that have received any type of federal research grant, regardless of the source, should not be barred from these boards and panels. These are the very experts at the forefront of current and ongoing research that our Agency should rely upon for the best current available science.

Best practices for federal agencies are remaining apolitical and using the best available consensus science. Political appointments in our Agency, such as Administrator Pruitt and Ryan Jackson, are prime examples of the politicization of our Agency and our work at the expense of the health of our citizens and environment. These political appointees represent the worst kind of cronyism for industries that we are responsible for regulating, such as fossil fuel industries. These are clear conflicts of interest. Political appointees such as Administrator Pruitt highlight that the Trump Administration has and continues to select appointees that do not have the education or experience to successfully carry out the duties of their appointment. The Administrator is an embarrassment to the Agency; he doesn't even know basic current scientific principals, such as there is no safe level of lead exposure or that climate change is mainly caused by human activities.

1023 5/16/2017

1024 5/16/2017

Multiple requests for reports from management. Requests for new reports are becoming more frequent and are duplicative efforts to compile information readily available in existing reports and systems. Additionally, Management doesn't seem to be aware of the information contained in existing reports, it is often difficult to get clarity on the information sought, and there is an unwillingness to utilize Agency systems and tools. All Senior Leaders should be aware of how to use Agency reporting systems and should be facilitating adopting the Agency technology. Additionally, if there is information they are seeking, it would be infinitely more helpful if it was purpose and use could be communicated to those who need to compile it. There is likely a better suggestion for how to gather that information from the people who use it daily.

We need to better incorporate our external partners' business cycles into how we prioritize our activities to capitalize on efficiencies. Additionally we need to take a risk based approach to assessing organizations capacity to achieve the desired results.

Create a training center. Have a drinking water system and a waste water system there.

Encourage employees to take an actual Customer Service Training. One that focuses on excellent service delivery and effective outreach to basic stakeholder groups. Everyone who interfaces with individuals outside of this organization would benefit.

We need to improve the way technology is utilized within the Agency and improve EVERYONE's competency with basic programs and existing IT Solutions. Additionally, there needs to be better communication of the available IT solutions, their purpose, and how to deploy tools in the Organization.

fully funding SDWIS Prime. Create ALL of the Functionality to do the entire Drinking Water Compliance job in SDWIS Prime.

Improve the use of SharePoint and the Power Business Intelligence Analytics Tool. Information should be readily available online and that functionality would greatly improve HOW all employees of the agency interact with the information. Easy data access and understanding encourages users to use the platform. This would also go a long way to eliminating some of the "report" requests from Senior Management.

It would be beneficial to identify common lines of business across agencies and the common activities undertaken or common stakeholders. There are likely efficiencies that could be gained by finding a mechanism for sharing information across agencies more effectively. This type of collaborative approach would aid in streamlining activities the Agency and/or external stakeholder is responsible for, as well as developing a more effective and efficient workforce.

The Data Verification of State programs needs to be contracted out to Cadmus.

LEAN Six Sigma. Need to have commitment from Senior Leadership to do things differently rather than "do more with less". Focus on "Customer Experience" and "Performance Management" rather than simple service delivery. Meaningful metric should be developed and deployed to improve accountability and transparency.

Thanks for soliciting input. Here are a couple unproductive processes that could be improved:

1) Reduce the number of mandatory e-trainings that must be taken by EPA employees each year. Staff must take 5-8 of these trainings every year. For some trainings, like security awareness and ethics responsibilities, annual training for all staff is warranted. For others, e.g., Working with Tribal Governments, details on Continuity of Operations procedures, records management, IGMS (grant system) Rules of Behavior, the interval could be changed to every two years and/or the number of staff required to take the trainings could be reduced. AT 15-30 minutes per training and thousands of employees, the cumulative time savings would be significant.

2) Make correspondence with the public more streamlined. Letters and requests for information come into EPA from the public on a daily basis. When these letters are from Congressional representatives or other important groups/stakeholders, the current Controlled Correspondence process is appropriate. This process requires review by a number of managers before the letter arrives to the signatory (Administrator or Assistant Administrator). However we also get letters from students and citizens that want basic information on our programs or for a school project. Historically some of the have gone through the full controlled correspondence system, which can take weeks for the multiple approvals. Sometimes letters to students haven't been sent until well after the school year is over. The recommendation would be to allow these citizen and student letters to all be "direct reply," which would enable program staff to pull together basic information and get it back to the student or citizen quickly.

Programs could work with the Office of Grants and Debarment to further encourage multiyear grants for states. Some states and regions do this now in some programs. It's likely that more could productively do so. Managing multiyear grants can save effort over issuing single-year grants. We shouldn't force the practice on states, but could do more to highlight its benefits.

Continue the current trajectory (in water programs) of greater connectivity of related data systems and greater use of geospatial data to inform and describe the work of EPA and the states/tribes.

Decisions on administrative software acquisitions are made with little input from the actual end-users of those systems. A desire to save money on the front end of the process often results in the need to change our business practices to accommodate shortcomings of the software systems, resulting in inefficiencies, wasted staff time, and reduced capabilities. Involvement of the most-impacted users in advance and consideration of long-term costs as opposed to just acquisition costs would help prevent or mitigate the damage from these decisions.

Increased demands on researcher's time by accretion of administrative duties is having an impact on productivity and morale. While each new requirement for reporting, documenting, accounting, etc., may have small impacts in isolation, the cumulative impacts are large. Review of the necessity of each new administrative burden requirement and assessment of whether administrative support staff could accomplish the goals of such requirements instead of already overburdened research staff could be helpful and more cost effective.

There are not enough FTE's at our Division to effectively do the work that is only increasing in the admin area. The work has to be parsed out to the scientific staff, which takes away from completing the mission of the research.

I think more communication with the Regions who are in the position to communicate and partner with the states, tribes, local community and private sector. I would say that partnering with the tribes would be an area where our division could benefit.

Improving the connection between the Regions and the program offices

Untapped opportunities would be taking a better look at the EPA's administrative duties at all levels.

I think that every time there is a change in leadership at any level, the new leaders want to change effective programs to be their own ideas. This often results in doing away with a good program and instituting a bad program. This is done routinely so new leaders can make a name for themselves. This is not a good thing.

We can barely accomplish this within the EPA, let alone trying to do this with other federal agencies. That being said, there are a number of best practices at all levels of the EPA that could be shared with the other agencies. One that comes to mind is the Environmental Management System requirements for all agencies.

I mentioned EMS in the previous answer which I think is a great example of a best practice for the EPA. Our program and strategies could be shared among other agencies who I am afraid have no idea of what EMS is, even though it was started in 2003 by an executive order and continues to be a mandated requirement for all government organizations.

Another best practice would be in the area of scientific outreach and environmental education. So divisions do it better than others, but there is no money available to really have a worthy and effective program.

Shared service center and HR processes and functions must be addressed. Processing recruitments, classifications and employee services is broken. Regions and NPMs must have trained HR professional that can work with SSC and support managers and staff with HR processes. PSB is overwhelmed and security clearance process for low to mid risk needs to be addresses -- my EPA review was more intensive then when I was cleared for DOD and DOE clearance - not sure what it is we are protecting against within EPA given most employees are not dealing with sensitive and classified materials. Regions should consider consolidation of divisions - the recent reorgs have resulted in substantive increase in 1st line supervision responsibilities as a result of not consolidating Divisions (SES cadre) and Branches and associated overhead to meet supervisory ratios. The result is supervisors do not have the time needed to both supervise 14-20 direct reports and maintaining both programmatic and national program leadership responsibilities and performance.

Invest (underinvested) and work with States to fully adopt delegations and capacity and develop and conduct effective oversight for State grants and its program performance with reinvest and focus on EPA resources once this is done to those only EPA can do -- i.e. RCRA's 2020 vision.

Revise OECA goals to avoid generating orders and cases for the sake of a GPRA or ACS goal that the EPA program office and/or State (which it should be involved as a stakeholder) then becomes a long term "mortgage" that the program and states do not have the resources to support.

EPA needs to take a more external focus on its constituent services and a more moderate view of risk mitigation in dealing with the public and regulated community. EPA is too internally focused and risk adverse to the point of being ineffective in being adaptable and responsive.

Restructure SES cadre and consider activating mobility requirements to increase bandwidth and reduce risk aversion, search for perfection, and inability to tolerate or celebrate failure has in my view overtaken EPA's SES cadre and stymies and discourages staff and manager innovation and effectiveness

Under resourced for adequate ADPE gear for employees. Computer and gear should be renewed every 3 years versus the average now of 5-6 which causes lots of downtime and lost productivity. Expand and explore use of mobile work space - improve web based tools and support

I currently serve as an HR liaison for my office and run into issues with staff in the OAES who are not well versed in the various HR process they are responsible. This in turn makes getting my job that much more difficult when it comes to getting a question answered. EPA has in place multiple systems/program that can provide management with pertinent information on how to get this done, but access is restricted or no one knows how to access it. Trainings for the new processes also don't always trickle down to all the right players. Having a sharepoint site or something of that nature that all HR assistants, analyst etc can access for instructions, trainings etc would be helpful. Having more streamlined processes move allow things to more and work more efficiently such as having to go through a 3rd party to make changes to the routing in CONCUR slows down the process significantly and is not the best use of the 3rd parties time. Allowing a single POC from the office be able to reach out and make request for routing changes would keep to stop the bottle when it comes to getting changes done efficiently.

Better training on the capabilities of the existing technologies would help in making most processes more efficient, Things such as adopting digital signatures on documents would cut down on the cost of paper and time. Fully informing staff of the capabilities of the various software systems would allow staff to work smarter not harder.

1030

5/16/2017

Currently, there are two administrative/managerial processes that impact the efficiency of the agency's work. They are:

1. Current Administrator-level decisionmaking regarding region-specific actions. I appreciate that Administrator Pruitt is coming to this Agency with both a jaundiced eye toward its past decisions and a desire to make changes to existing policies and procedures. This is natural and understandable in a new administration. However, I think this desire is being manifested in a disconnect between regions and HQ. At the staff level we have received very little guidance on how the Administrator wishes to implement his vision: the Schnare email and the "Improved Management of Regulatory Actions" memo are all we have to work with, and I think they sow more confusion than clarity. Judging a regional action against these documents to determine whether to involve HQ is a painful exercise that seems mostly to consist of more tea leaf reading than anything and, ultimately, results in stasis rather than moving a project forward.

Recommendation: Put together a one-page checklist, form or something similar that captures the Administrator's priorities. Require that all regional actions prior to seating of a permanent RA be reviewed through the lens of the form. If a particular project meets enough criteria in the list, then require it to be forwarded to HQ for review. Commit to final review and decision on any particular decision (with leeway obviously for complex decisions) within a specified time (e.g., 30 days).

2. Streamline programmatic coordination between HQ and Regions. Do you want to make EPA more efficient? Rein in your headquarters programmatic staff. There are decisions in the region that have been subject to literally years of indecision by HQ mid-level and upper-level managers. This level of indecision and wavering significantly impedes regional decisionmaking and, in some cases, seems to have resulted in less defensible Agency decisions. Handwringing over whether we're going to get sued is not an effective way to make decisions. Make it, and be done.

Recommendation: I'm not sure. However, there must be a way to cut short the eleventy-billion hours of discussion on major discussions.

Comprehensive ICIS code review on a state-by-state basis. Streamline and rationalize ICIS coding so that datapulls can be done more quickly and easily, and provide comprehensive and comparable cross-state compliance data.

This is a hard one. Personally, I strive to answer every call I receive from outside parties within 24 hours, provide the best answer I can at the point of first contact, follow-up in a timely fashion (as necessary), and make sure that the caller knows they can call me back if they need additional assistance. If customer service is an actual issue, perhaps some kind of outside contact tracking system? If an EPA employee receives a call, log it, describe it, and track the follow-up. Use that as a metric in PARS?

I know this sounds silly, but have the maintenance staff fill the paper towel dispensers only 3/4 full. Typically, they're packed so full that when one tries to pull out a paper towel, you end up ripping one and pulling out three additional in the effort. They're checked every week day, so just don't fill them up all the way. We'll surely save money that way.

Otherwise, someone smarter than me will have to opine.

See above re customer service tracking software. Also, please, please, please do not cut the budget for FOIA/discovery response technology. OEI is making it work now, but they need more resources and FTEs to allow for quicker, more accurate FOIA responses.

I work in NPDES. From my perspective, we work pretty darn well with our respective states providing review and oversight of state-issued permits. Over the last 4-5 years, we've had a pretty light touch in our review, really only calling out glaring inconsistencies with the requirements of the CWA. Maybe states feel differently? I don't think so, but maybe it's worth asking the States?

I don't. Sorry.

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Cut out some of the bureaucracy, for example, the number of mandatory annual online trainings has risen greatly over the years. Even though, these trainings are often less than one hour to complete, nevertheless, they do cut into our regular work schedules. If at all possible, it would be helpful to cut the number of these trainings.

As a rank and file employee (non-Managerial and non-Supervisor), I do not experience any administrative, managerial or organizational issues in the execution of my duties and responsibilities.

Periodically, the EPA should reach out to libraries and community centers by posting contact information to the EPA, if people witness or suspect that illegal dumping of hazardous materials has occurred in their area. This is a boots on the ground approach for the EPA to become aware of potential environmental problems. Often, people don't even know who to contact in such situations.

What is meant by "better environmental results?" Improved communication? Increased oversight?

Periodically and internally, the EPA should update its Experts List, and send it out to EPA employees so that they're aware of who to contact when someone calls from outside the Agency seeking specific information. This should especially be made available to the Office of Public Affairs employees because they are often points of contact for outside parties. Also, contact information to the Office of Public Affairs itself should be made easier on the Agency's website for outside parties calling in.

Be responsive to requests for support. Set goals and guidelines for customer service response actions. Increase visibility to local communities to demonstrate our desire to respond to environmental issues in the community.

Cut out the middle man. The Agency's decisions should be based on best available science, whenever possible. This means that scientists with advanced degrees should be playing the bigger role in decision making, not bachelor degree managers with over inflated salaries. Therefore, cut out bachelor degree managers and replace them with advanced degree scientists for decision making. Often, bachelor degree managers are an obstacle to progress because they don't understand the science, or are afraid of it.

Better management of personnel. Hold poor performers accountable and reward those who meet and exceed expectations of the position. Evaluate the job duties of individuals. Assess efficiencies of each position. Is each person being maximized in regards to their time and capabilities?

Improved and intelligent Search engines to tap into online resources, as well as internal databases, to find answers to pressing questions.

Invest more in renewable energy technologies at EPA facilities. In order to send a message to the Public to support these industries, the agency should lead by example. Not just by having a token system that only handles a small fraction of our energy needs, but substantial systems that can handle entire facilities.

Minimize the overlap and duplicate efforts that often exist among various agencies. On the other hand, minimize the minor differences that often exist among various agencies, and therefore that prevent decision making and moving forward.

In the areas of wastewater and drinking water, responsibility is already delegated to the States. The EPA provides oversight to these programs such as State Permitting for NPDES (CWA) and Primacy status for States to maintain Drinking Water certifications for labs within their State (SDWA). Re-alignment of activities is not necessary in these areas.

For starters, appoint more conservative Regional Administrators. Liberal Administrators are sometimes notorious for being big time spenders. In the private sector, such companies go belly up.

Increase accountability for employees. In the private sector, poor performers are typically not tolerated. The private sector must operate efficiently in order to survive economically.

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I am in Region 2, working at the Caribbean Environmental Protection Division: One of the most disappointing aspects is working with "out dated" and or "Obsolete" Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with State Agencies, in this case the PR Environmental Quality Board. Also, the lack of attention to detail in to implementing and following EPA Orders, such as EPA Order 3500.1 and EPA Order 4711.

Offices within the Office of the Administrator, specifically the Office of Children's Health Protection, are not given the same direction and are not held to the same level of accountability as other program offices in HQ. As a result, the Office of Children's Health Protection, and others like it, have no clear vision and often duplicates work of other program offices. I recommend addressing this by appointing someone within the Office of the Administrator to be directly responsible for the oversight, direction and accountability of such offices.

EPA's time and attendance system - PeoplePlus. Agency is wasting money on a stand a lone system where we could migrate and get this service from the Interior Business Center --- which I believe was the original intent when the agency moved HR and payroll services.

The antithesis of the above, updating MOU's, setting realistic goals and focus on better planning to achieve good executions. Historically, this office is more focused on numbers "bean counting" that actually achieving environmental benefits all together.

Increase meaningful outreach and actually following through on programs, partnerships, and services long-term.

Ensure all efforts that result from partnerships are sustainable at the local level - this should be a primary goal/component of all partnership engagement activities and programs.

Provide more participation in open forums and include them in Agency "Idea banks" so we could hear, brainstorm and execute. Sometimes the solutions are in those idea banks.

Utilize existing positions or establish new offices within each region to be dedicated to providing quality customer services to states.

Establish a new office in HQ that will specialize in environmental outreach to underserved populations and dedicate another office that will target the regulated community.

Fraud Waste use and Abuse from Management. This sometimes goes "un-punished" based on a culture of "Complacency".

Yes, reorganize offices that have a high ratio of managers to staff (e.g., the Office of Children's Health Protection).

Also look at offices that are cross-organizational, like the Office of Children's Health Protection, and fold these positions into other program offices. This would eliminate inefficiencies, duplication of work, while ensuring integration of such programs and maintaining environmental protections.

Next Generation Enforcement: This have been widely discussed, but poorly implemented. Using Technology (web based programs and applications). This include remote monitoring and related equipment that will help reduce costs.

Managers need to be held accountable for their ability to lead. It is completely ineffective to have supervisors in place who understand the work (technical skills) but lack the ability to motivate or work well with others (leadership skills). The existing process for rating and hiring managers needs to be modified in a way that removes poor performing and inadequate managers from supervisory positions.

Create Round Table discussions in different program areas or areas of expertise amongst sister agencies (DHS, USGS, CDC, DHHS, etc.). Redefining and re-shaping the way our agency do things.

As previously mentioned: look at offices that are cross-organizational, like the Office of Children's Health Protection, and fold these positions into other program offices. This would eliminate inefficiencies, duplication of work, while ensuring integration of such programs and maintaining environmental protections.

Is not a matter of having Management Systems, is how EPA implement those and having the organizational culture to perform and execute (e.g. ISO 14001, Lean Six Sigma, etc).

In addition to the aforementioned recommendations, EPA needs to focus on outreach and employee engagement as much as we do outreach. The Agency needs to make "Talent Management" a priority to improve efficiencies in areas including retention and knowledge management. Human resources is EPA's greatest asset and needs to be a priority...EPA's mission can not be accomplished without dedicated staff.

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Presently, the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance requires that enforcement against tribally owned/operated facilities be reviewed, concurred, and approved by the Assistant Administrator for enforcement. The review, concurrence and approval process is very burdensome on the Regions and overall no additional value is added. The Regions have vast experience in developing, issuing and enforcement of legal documents. A multitude of Regional Attorneys and management are involved in the development and approval of the legal documents. We can gain efficiencies by removing the requirement that OECA must concur and approve enforcement actions against Tribally owned/operated facilities.

Computer and on-line access - Single Sign-on should be just that. There are multiple on-line links needed to either perform your job or access administrative services. Each has a separate log-in with passwords expiring within different time frames. It is burdensome and not efficient. It would be preferable to have a more secure, robust initial log-in but then that's it - you're in.

States have been delegated most of the environmental statutes. We can achieve better environmental results by having the states focus on egregious, repeat violators. EPA should focus on ensuring that the environmental statutes are implemented in non-delegated states and on Tribal Lands. We need to stop the mountain of administrative requirements that are self imposed and those we impose on the states (performance partnership agreements, mid-year reports, end of year reports, compliance monitoring strategies, strategic plans, oversight plans). Why are all these documents required and needed. We should be focused on acquiring true environmental results.

Certainly the amount of internal regional coordination and communication needs to be addressed. Efficiencies can be gained by limiting the amount of Headquarters (HQ) involvement, review, and approval. While it is understood that HQ has a difficult job of ensuring a consistent environmental program across the Nation, it needs to be recognized that our Nation is not consistent in the environmental stresses it encounters. Western Regions have different environmental stresses than Eastern Regions. We can gain efficiencies by delegating decision making to the lowest possible management level. Senior Leadership (SES level and above) have become much more involved in decision making. Senior Leadership involvement is not always the best solution as they are too far removed from the day to day issues. Yet, they are briefed on a matter for maybe 15-30 minutes and they have all the solutions and decree what should be implemented. Not good. Delegate, delegate, delegate.

Re-instate the "Superfund tax"

Change the tax code to allow for remedy/Site cleanup costs to be deductible-written off. Currently the legal fees to fight cleanup can be deducted; make cleanup costs deductible then cleanup and environmental protections would be completed more quickly.

We need to be able to electronically concur, approve and sign documents. We are still in the 18th century where paper is king. We have documents that are reviewed and approved by several individuals from several different offices. It is not unusual not to know where the document is. People spend so much time trying to find out where the document is located, who has it, has it been reviewed, has it been signed? We need to approve electronic signatures. We need to be able to electronically track a document. My goodness UPS, FedEx and others can track packages, why can't we track our documents?

Give the Regions control of Superfund program Special Account money. Every year the Regions wait for HQs to move the money where it can be used. Every year. That 2-3 month lag is not efficient. It delays work and creates uncertainty for scheduling.

This is already being done. It is not a new concept. We already partner extensively with other federal agencies and states. This also needs support and money. Federal partner liaison programs' funding is being cut. The future is uncertain for state cooperative agreement funding.

First, this seems ludicrous and presumptive coming from leadership that has not put one step forward to show they actually care about the mission of the Agency. How are any in the agency supposed to trust, or even want to support an entire leadership group who's aim is obviously to hand the mission of the Agency over to those most opposed to the Congressional intent that founded it? None in the leadership group coming in have taken any time to explore what has already been done over almost 10 years of downsizing and hard decisions to seek efficiencies.

Second, all those past downsizing efforts, some really excellent in trimming redundancy and inefficiency, have taken a terrific toll on the Agency being able to perform at top form, or even keep up with current day technology. Ridiculous platitudes about more with less are idiotic and not helpful.

First, trust that EPA staff already do this very well.

Second restore budgets for travel to the partners' home turf for face to face dialogue. Partnerships require trust. Almost all travel budgets have been severely cut and modern teleconferencing technology has taken the place of face to face meetings, except for the highest level of managers and leaders who believe only they can represent the Agency. Some of this has been effective. It is over used, and EPA has lost it's "this is my face, this is me, representing EPA as an ambassador" reputation and capacity. This is a very sad. The Agency's current untrustworthy incoming leadership state and work environment, growing exponentially every minute, is an impossible scenario to overcome. Better environmental results from partnering with states, tribes, local communities, and even the private sector cannot be achieved until the leadership of the Agency and its partner Federal Departments and Agencies is brought into balance. It is not balanced. the Agency's leadership is unbalanced, obviously focused outward, to industry, the entity regulated only. No credible gain in efficiencies can be achieved in an environment where there is no balance and understanding of what the Agency does, why it does it, and how to do it even better. You have not listened to learn. The leadership has presumed to know that downsizing everything and being more business efficient is the path forward for the next 8 years.

See 2. above. The leadership needs to show it respects the work force and understands past years' efforts for economizing operations, how they have worked and have not worked.

One small example, legislatively required, is that the City Pairs travel contract can often lead to over costs in airline travel. This has never been something that has been effectively changed, yet staff usually can find more cost sensible (competitive) prices than the contract airlines. Overall, it has been explained that the Agency saves more by using this approach. It does not seem that way to non main hub destinations in regions with more rural makeup. Probably some significant savings if that requirement could be more flexible. Good luck.

Again, this survey has not chosen to understand what the Agency has done, been through, in the past decade to modernize, become more efficient, engage in automation and IT already. Given continued budget reductions, a setting of hostility toward the workforce and the Agency mission in a modern age (seriously, you take away the entire history of the Agency work on climate change and expect to have an ounce of credibility in the work force or the world!?), the past technology fixes seem close to having been competitive (or, at least that is what we are told every time a new software package like MS Outlook or people plus is rolled out). Were your predecessors exaggerating their accomplishments? Will you be when you roll out your next brilliant operations? Off to a bad start so far.

the best way to work most effectively with partners is to get out ahead of decision making processes early, talk often and share information as soon in any process as possible. I would put to you that the Agency does this very well in many ways. Just because one does not want to hear that the Agency is effective already, and that this results in rule making, or interactions that are difficult for some sectors, does not mean the Agency is fatally flawed, as the current leadership has demonstrated it believes and is certain must change.

One recommendation is to not roll out new systems, processes or procedures that are favored contracts from contacts with current leadership without extensive testing, vetting and proven results. The fix for everything seems to be IT innovation, but that innovation seems never fully tested, leaving the workforce to do the heavy lifting on living with inefficient systems, correcting system glitches over time, not having put the time and effort in up front prior to implementation. That mistake is about to be repeated given the presumptive leap of this survey. Please save us the grief and look before you leap, learn before you lead. You said you would.

Allow employees to work at home 5 days per week. Presently, the maximum allowed is 2. All the established benefits associated with work at home would be increased proportionally, and it create the additional benefit of allowing a reduction in the amount of office space that is necessary, thereby reducing operating cost, i.e., rent or (rent or buildings owned). This could be applied across government, not just EPA.

Presently, if a budget is not all used, the next year's budget is reduced. This guarantees each person in charge of a budget will use all of it, so their budget will not be reduced the following year. There is no incentive to save money. Rather, the incentive is to spend it all (and ask for more).

I don't see my idea as a best practice implemented anywhere, but decades ago I first thought that if employees were given as a bonus in their paycheck, a percentage of the amount they reduced their budget, this would incentivize reducing cost at all levels of government. The logistics of actually getting this done would, of course, be challenging and time consuming.

I think the approach could be applied to extramural budgets for programs, internal operating costs, or FTEs. For example, if a manager agrees to permanently give up an FTE, the manager and their staff gets a fraction of the cost savings each year as a bonus. Just providing the bonus to the manager would be unfair to the staff that will be doing more work as a result of the manager's decision. (And since this is my idea, I would get a percentage of the entire amount saved across all of government.)

1040

5/17/2017

I work in enforcement.

1. Administrative requirements- There are too many databases that have to be populated, filling out the databases for a simple inspection where no follow-up action is taken could take 2 hours. There are national databases, region specific databases, branch specific databases, and program/sub-program specific databases.

2. Administrative/Management- There are very little standards of practice (SOP) in place, people are unsure what the processes are (administrative, enforcement, jurisdictional), and it makes everything debatable or questionable. Ten people do it ten different ways, no consistency.

For instance, we should have a simple standard such that an inspection report will be sent out to the regulated entity after it is finalized so that the regulated party can begin to implement changes and EPA can talk with the state regarding the findings.

Our branch has no such standard, which leads to-

3. Management procedures- For instance, if management believes the inspection findings are significant I might hear something like this "We are not going to send the inspection report out now, because we need to "Order" through formal enforcement said facility, and we are worried that if we issue the report, the facility may correct the problem before we "Order" them to correct it." Does this make sense? No. However, management is so concerned with getting a "bean" or "bean counting" (that is what they call it) that they would delay notifying the facility of a concern until a formal enforcement action is issued (takes a long time). So a facility could go years before addressing a concern through formal enforcement, that they may have address immediately or within months had we simply notified them and had a conversation (in conjunction with the state) of the concerns up front and not created this hostile situation to develop in the first place.

3. Management does not take into account the time commitment of investigations, review of technical documents,

1. I have the utmost respect for my counterparts at the state, however, EPA management either do not trust the state or have power conflicts.
2. We all need to have clear lines of communication. Previous to Pruitt, I have never been encouraged to communicate with the states. I spent too much time last year trying to get involved with the states enforcement process, where a state wanted to pursue enforcement, because a power conflict between management at the State and EPA. This shouldn't happen, especially when a state is pursuing the issue.
3. I think we should be asking each state where they need assistance in implementing their program and should help in that way, in addition to overseeing and assisting in clear problem areas in the state in which there is significant public exposure.

Customer service is not a priority to management at the lower levels. Prioritize it and set clear objectives and goals.

Standards of Practice

Instead of working as "OneEPA" every branch or program are doing there own processes for workflow and file management. These things should be standardized at the national level.

1. Better file management, it would surprise you how much time staff level spends search records down for a magnitude of reasons. If you requested the all actions issued by the branch in the past 5 years it would probably take 3 months for headquarters to get the documents. It should be able to be done in quick pull from a proper system considering the state of technology.

Well I think we should be assisting the states more in areas they have problems in. More resources should be put toward communicating and working in partnership with the states. Same for other federal agencies, I would not even be able to tell you a point of contact for the other federal agencies that work on the same mission. That's a problem.

Yes, but, I am not going to voice them here. What I am going to voice is that management isn't always focused on management and that any of these best practices will have a hard time being implemented because resources are not put toward efficiencies and workers are not rewarded for improving efficiencies.

1041 5/17/2017

Per the 2016 Civil Monetary Penalty Inflation Adjustment Rule and the Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act Improvement Act of 2015, our statutory penalty maximum amounts and guidance establishing appropriate penalty policy amounts are increased annually -- at a rate much faster than we typically receive updated penalty policies or matrices for each penalty policy guidance. This means that each case team has to expend a lot of time and energy trying to come up with complicated ways to account for the required inflation adjustment for each case. The fact that people all over the country are trying to come up with spreadsheets or to do manual calculations to account for this required inflation adjustment seems like a waste of resources. It would be much easier if someone at headquarters developed a web-based program that could be put on the intranet (or just installed on all computers, like the BEN economic benefit program) that each case team could use to easily punch in the relevant data for their case (dates of violation, etc.) and it would spit out the appropriate penalty based on the constantly-changing inflation adjustment.

Consolidate time-keeping systems and eliminate paper copies. Establish electronic concurrence processes for documents. Streamline and push delegations down to the lowest position possible.

Increase travel budgets to allow collaborative training, outreach, and compliance events at the Regional level (where the interaction occurs). Currently, state relations suffers from restrictive travel budgets. We are unable to train state staff and leverage their activities to provide compliance assistance.

Staffing shortfalls prohibit the Regions from collaborating on other efforts as well, such as newsletters and webinars and staffing hotlines.

All above are particularly impactful in rural areas where local and state resources and funding are more scarce. In these areas, web-based communications are not as effective or even always an option.

see 2

Headquarters and ORD are inflated. Staff and resources should be diverted to the regions where interaction with states, locals, and industry can be more effective.

see 1. Also, mobile device technology and applications are 10 years behind the private sector. OEI has largely been unresponsive. Mobile technologies for staff would increase access to industry for compliance assistance and collaborative opportunities with state and locals while reducing costs.

Increase the use of outposts (even home-based work locations) to increase access to the public and industry while reducing costs.

outpost more to locations with state offices.

First of all, it is challenging to respond to this and other questions without taking into account the President's proposed reduction in EPA's budget by 31%. This action, if carried out, would greatly dwarf any minor annoyances with administrative processes, management procedures, or other organizational processes., and would result in EPA being far less effective in achieving its mission of protecting human health and the environment. It would greatly reduce EPA's (and states') ability to implement the many environmental laws and programs that we currently implement, and would hamper EPA's ability to conduct analyses that protect the economy, the environment, and public health.

First of all, states, tribes, and local communities require financial assistance in order to function. Significantly reducing EPA's budget in areas that provide direct assistance to states and tribes -- for example, significant proposed cuts to the Public Water System Supervision Program -- would dramatically curtail the ability of states and others to protect drinking water. Partnering with states is not simply about ensuring flexibility in EPA's policies, but -- even more importantly -- it's about providing the resources that states need to do their jobs.

I believe EPA is already quite effective in these activities. EPA maintains strong relationships -- through EPA HQ and the Regions -- with states, tribes, local communities, the regulated community, and the public.

Generally speaking, no. Dramatic reductions in EPA's budget, as proposed, would significantly increase costs and inefficiencies as fewer (and less-qualified) EPA staff are required to continue to implement the statutory authorities with which EPA is tasked. This will result in cutting corners and reducing the quality of EPA's work, likely leading to increased litigation, poorer customer service, and dramatically reduced environmental protection

Yes -- there are a number of advanced monitoring technologies in the air and water areas that could greatly improve the ability for EPA, states, the regulated community, and others, to monitor environmental performance and assess compliance. However, researching and implementing these technologies requires investment by EPA and partners. Significant proposed reductions in EPA's budget for programs in the Office of Research and Development, Office of Environmental Information, and elsewhere, would dramatically decelerate EPA's transition toward these new technologies, and would result in exactly the opposite outcome than this question intends to create.

The E-Enterprise for the Environment model is a strong example of how EPA can partner effectively with states to pursue shared goals. I'd recommend this and similar work be continued.

"Realignment" suggests that EPA and states are not currently working together effectively to implement environmental policies, a statement with which I disagree. "Realignment" should not mean abdicating a federal role -- particularly in areas of cross-border pollution such as the Chesapeake Bay -- as has been proposed. Moreover, "realignment" should not mean walking away from common-sense environmental policies that already protect the economy and human health simply because one or more states believe that a particular policy should be modified. Our environmental policy should be forward-looking, not backward-looking in the sense that it aims to delegitimize policies, regulations, or other actions that have already been taken.

Cross-agency EPA Lean efforts have been quite successful in multiple areas toward improving efficiency, increasing accountability, and reducing costs. Many of these efforts have also involved collaborating with states and tribes toward achieving effective outcomes. It's important to note that efficiency efforts such as Lean require resources and management support to achieve. If staff are simultaneously managing significant reductions to the scope and budget of their programs (as has been proposed), it's exceptionally unlikely that these efforts will continue to result in successful outcomes.

1044 5/17/2017

1045 5/17/2017

Lead: As specified in OLEM Directive 9200.2-167, dated December 22, 2016, regions must undergo a consultation with OSRTI regarding choice of the blood lead level of health concern and other parameters for all sites where lead is a chemical of potential concern. The OLEM Directive indicates that the Agency considers the blood lead level of concern to be between 2 and 5 ug/dL, based on sufficient evidence found by the National Toxicology Program at BLLs less than 5 ug/dL and in numerous studies examining BLLs between 2 - 8 ug/DL that are presented in the Integrated Science Assessment. Requiring each individual Superfund and RCRA site, including those without RODs, those needing removal actions, and those up for five-year reviews to undergo consultations is a very inefficient process with inconsistent approaches across the Agency. Additionally, it significantly adds to the workload of the regions, while slowing down the Superfund and RCRA programs. Instead, EPA HQ should issue a memo with national policy that specifically identifies selects a BLL of concern between 2 and 5 ug/dL, as well as recommends the current exposure parameters we should use in our lead models.

Basic requirements for correspondence are constantly changing. It would be a good practices to have quarterly updates to the Correspondence Manual and Processes. Whether it is with a Mass Mailer or meeting to facilitate these changes.

If we entrust states, tribes, or local communities with greater responsibilities, we should increase grants and funding to these parties.

N/A

We should strive for transparency, clear communication, and consistent approaches across our entire Agency to gain trust from stakeholders.

N/A

Biased parties should recuse themselves from peer review of toxicity values derived by the EPA. As an example, the military is responsible for gross contamination of our groundwater with chlorinated solvents. As primary stakeholders, the input they provide on the development of toxicity values used to estimate potential risks and ultimately derive cleanup values should be minimized.

EPA headquarters should issue national direction on lead, as well as on PFOS/PFOA.

N/A

The use of mobile technology is key to be more efficient. Currently it takes a lot of "red tape" to be able to get mobile devices such as iPads. EPA employees have iPhones but they don't connect to EPA Intranet Sites to provide services. Being able to request one without the "red tape" would make efficiency improve.

Also, being able to use Digital Signatures to sign documents would cut down on costs of printers, paper, etc.

It is not in the best interest of the American public or ethical for partial (i.e., biased) stakeholders to significantly shape the development of EPA toxicity values. Such stakeholders, which includes other federal agencies, should recuse themselves.

N/A

N/A

Nothing is preventing me from doing my job efficiently or effectively, however, with any process there are always ways to improve. In this light (i.e., to improve the process), a way to help streamline Superfund cleanup times would be eliminate PRP-lead sites and to have EPA employees complete the remedial investigations and supporting documents. potentially responsible parties (PRP)-lead sites are routinely bogged down in negotiations and stalling tactics which drastically slow down the investigations and response time. Of course, in order to accomplish this, additional staff levels and funding would be needed but the result of moving projects and cleanups in a more timely fashion would help the Agency achieve our core mission of protecting human health and the environment.

As indicated above, partnering with the private sector through PRP-lead investigations do not lead to better results. However, by having EPA employees perform the remedial investigations would increase the current partnering with states, tribes and local communities as staff would have more time to devote to listening to states, tribes and local communities instead of being tied up in tedious negotiations with potentially responsible parties.

EPA has a robust community involvement footprint and uses a variety of tools to reach stakeholders. Increasing social media outlets and promoting the science and achievements that EPA accomplishes everyday will aid the public at large, as well as states, tribes and local communities in understanding the work that EPA does, which in turn will help them provide EPA with feedback on how we can improve interactions. Improving customer service to the regulated community is a more difficult task as the regulated community needs to comply with regulations to ensure the protection of human health and the environment.

The biggest waste of resources I have observed in my 15+ years at EPA is the amount of time and money that is wasted by the regulated community trying to negotiate or stall in adhering to laws. It is not uncommon for the regulated community to attend a meeting with a roomful of people to argue about collecting a few more samples so that EPA can make a better scientific decision to protect human health and the environment, with the end result being that the regulated group spends more money in the meeting on salaries (for both themselves and EPA staff which bill hours to the project that is recovered from the regulated party) than they would save by just collecting the needed samples. And the same regulated parties then complain that the project costs too much and takes too long, when they are the major factor in both issues.

Yes, there are always new technologies that can be adopted or modernized to make investigations and cleanups more effective and efficient. EPA's Office of Research and Development are a key factor in providing the necessary scientific research to identify and move the technologies forward for use by EPA staff, as well as states, tribes and the local community. Developing new technologies also helps to create jobs while fostering an improvement to human health and the environment.

Within the Superfund program, harmonizing the remedy with restoration activities, which are under the responsibility of NOAA and USFWS, would be a way to ensure that the environment is returned to a useful resources in a more timely manner. This could be accomplished by merging CERCLA with the NRDA authorities with a net result in reducing the sampling and analysis costs because only one set of data would be needed instead of two. This would reduce the cost incurred by the regulated community and result in a more timely cleanup, which benefits public health and the environment.

One best practice that would help speed up cleanups at Superfund sites would be to expand the flexibility of the Agency in using presumptive remedies. Currently, only specific types of sites, such as landfills, can proceed with a presumptive remedy, which means there are proven technologies that can be employed to address contamination at a landfill without conducting a full remedial investigation and feasibility study. By expanding the flexibility for EPA to use presumptive remedies for other categories of sites, such as contaminated sediment, the cost and time for identifying remedies to address polluted sites could be decreased, while achieving the core mission of protecting human health and the environment.

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1) Purchasing Limitation 1: We utilize the Mandatory GSA Advantage website for purchasing for our in-house stock room. When one logs into GSA Advantage and looks for one specific item, say an archival 0.5 mm black ballpoint pen, you are instantly given hundreds of contract results for the same pen. Each option has a different "strategic buying" icon(s). We were told that out of all of those hundreds of options we are to use the one labeled "FSSI" Only! Reluctantly we chose that option and receive a pen that is 0.5mm, black and ballpoint but a subpar Skillcraft brand "similar" that is not Archivable! I read the language of the FSSI agreement and it allows the contractor to substitute, in order to save the government money, an equivalent lower cost item at their discretion. The problem here is that the Government paid the same price as list in the non-FSSI contract for a sub-par PEN! It's fine to have different buying options but it's ridiculous to have hundreds of different buying options just to tell us we can only use ONE of them and it doesn't give us what we need. GSA Advantage is broken.

2) Purchase Card Limit of \$3500 before EAS required: Each year scientific parts and equipment go up in price about 5%. Many replacement parts for instruments we used to be able to buy on a purchase card. When those parts break and we need new ones, sample downtime was at most 2 weeks to get a part. If that part is now \$3600 it will likely take 6 months to get all the required approvals through EAS along with an additional Sole-Source Letter and independent verification etc. We can't predict part failures etc. and we cannot wait 6 months to get an instrument back up and running.

3) Offsite FCOs: Only 7 years ago when I first came to the Agency, purchases could be approved in 1 day. We simply printed out our PR, walked around to gather Branch Chief, Purchase Card Holder, Approving Official (Branch Chief) and FCO's signatures. At this time we had our own in-house person operating as our FCO. It was way more efficient than the broken ORD Purchase Card system we have now. Then to layer on top of that the PNET system; it's horrific.

It seems that the government, in general, is tying its own hands behind its back. As a result, in order to achieve each agency's individual missions, more gets done through Contracts. No one will ever convince me that a contract for personnel that are housed/office on-site is cheaper than if they were Federal Employees. We lose a lot of personnel (facilities, IT, other support services) because the pay and benefits are so low. The contractors can't backfill these. Budget uncertainty is always an issue- while I understand that congress controls that timeline, it would be an advantage to have it sooner for planning with our NSSC. Or we could hire entry level scientist to provide a consistent workforce for research planning.

Tying the leave system to the pay roll system. Once leave is approved it should automatically update our timecards.

From my narrow perspective, I think the EPA does a fine job with this already.

Please see Q1. In general, the transition from Fewer feds to more Contractors and purchasing limitations/requirements/restrictions are making all scientists into Administration each year. Eventually, it will be hard to do any science at any of the labs.

More funding for replacing outdated equipment. newer equipment could reduce the sample volumes collected and transported, the run time on samples-being able to run more samples in less time, reduce reagent volume which saves in the cost of those reagents and disposal of the generated waste. Newer instruments may have less breakdowns-saving time in trouble shooting.

Yes. Especially with IT and computer systems, but it seems our hands are tied up with the required contracts that are awarded to us from people that do not understand at all what it is we do in our lab.

Increased use of crowd sourcing. New in situ instrumentation.

Prezi instead of powerpoint

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Purchasing is a black hole of time. As the PO on an equipment purchase, it took 14 months to be awarded after the submission of the package to the EAS system. The National Student Services Contract has helped greatly.

EPA needs to partner better with these parties. Right now, these interactions are like a big brother telling the little brother to do something. Using matching money concept, i.e., federal funds are matched by funds from state, local or other parties. Because everyone has something in the game, folks work better for a common goal.

One of the biggest impacts that we could have is in utilizing our considerable scientific expertise to better inform and educate the public at the local community level about the established scientific facts around the hazards posed to human health and the economic costs to society of harmful chemical exposures and climate change. Scientific fact is not, and must never be allowed to be viewed as, simply a matter of opinion or policy. General scientific illiteracy poses a huge risk to the ability of local communities to make decisions in their own best interests, especially in an era of "alternative facts". EPA is in a position to explain in clear language the risks posed by various exposures and activities, and to demonstrate the science that underlies our understanding of those risks. EPA can partner with community colleges, school districts, and teacher education programs at various public and private universities to provide students and educators with the information they need to understand the science underlying environmental protection decisions. Although such interactions have been happening on an ad hoc basis for decades, a more formal outreach effort could have immense benefit to the American public, and to our efforts to protect human health and the environment.

I have no recommendations

I have no recommendations

I have no recommendations

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At this point, a significant hurdle to moving forward successfully with priority activities is the lack of senior management within the EPA and as a result, lack of direction on paths forward for critical work. This could be addressed by prioritizing the nomination of AAs for the relevant media office. Particularly useful nominees would have substantive knowledge in those media areas, as well as experience working in the government. Managing environmental obligations while providing opportunities for economic and other development is difficult and sometimes complex work that requires a balance of cost, benefits, and significant strategic analyses. Career staff can provide the information that support these analyses, but ultimately, decisions need to be made in a thoughtful and considered manner to enable forward progress. To the extent nominees for AA-ships are not available, I would recommend that political management take advantage of the knowledge and experience of career staff by seeking out briefings to enable useful decision making in the interim. Briefings should be effective and condensing years of complex information into 6 bullets, as we are asked to do, is not effective. It's helpful if political management provide some information about what types of briefings are helpful to them so career staff can adjust accordingly, but a directive to condense every briefing into a set length is not necessarily the most effective or efficient process. The result of this is often multiple briefings and/or difficulty implementing decision making which is made based on insufficient understanding of the processes and issues.

Training modules should be more tailored to our individual needs and responsibilities. ORD's matrix has increased the size of management while the overall research budget has been reduced. A slimmer more efficient managerial structure is badly needed.

I have three recommendations for improvement in this area:

1. Moving to electronic systems for as many programs as possible

- EPA has been slow to move towards electronic tracking and management systems for enforcement, permitting, compliance/monitoring, among other areas.
- The slow pace of electronic transition has resulted in a patchwork of electronic programs as each media area "does what it can with what it has" to make due
- Recommend a comprehensive overhaul of EPA's electronic systems to consolidate into as few systems as possible and move to electronic media for all submittals to EPA including all permits across all media
- This will be a short term high resource investment which will likely ultimately improve EPA's efficiency overall and facilitate better collaboration/communication and better environmental results from all stakeholders

2. Setting clear and effective metrics for assessing success of program implementation

- EPA's current metrics for assessing program effectiveness are likely outdated
- The EPA is often delayed in meeting statutory deadlines for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to, lack of political will to take the actions that are necessary, lack of funding to process the high number of actions required to be processed by the EPA, among other reasons
- Refreshing EPA's program effectiveness metrics especially in light of budget constraints, will enable EPA to prioritize the most significant work to achieve the best environmental results for EPA's resources

3. Ensuring that EPA staff have ample opportunities to collaborate with partners at all levels (i.e., staff, management, senior management, political management)

- Better communication between political management and staff within EPA regarding priorities, strategic goals, and EPA's work overall
- Better communication with states - political management appears focused on industry collaboration, but EPA has a myriad of stakeholders. A key to good and balanced environmental policy is communication and collaboration with all relevant stakeholders. One sided environmental policy is not good for anyone, even industry, because ultimately it subjects industry to liability.

More extensive processes need to be put in place to identify urgent research needs that are then fast tracked to appropriate federal laboratories. Quite the opposite occurs by which ORD does not have comprehensive research programs to tackle e.g. hydraulic fracturing or coal fly ash spills. There should also be a certain amount of freedom for federal scientists to follow their nose as they are the one's attending meetings and noting problems before that of the general public or administrative official.

Communicate regularly - talk with all stakeholders and openly share information on regulatory, guidance, and other priorities/actions. Communications should occur at all levels of government from staff-to-staff to higher level.

Collaborate frequently - collaboration is a level above simple communication. This is engaging with partners on workshops, webinars, meetings, and other more "hands on" opportunities to work together to achieve better environmental results

Make good on commitments such as meeting statutory deadlines - follow through is important in any relationship. The EPA needs to be able to show that it can make good on its commitments to its partners.

There needs to be better communication about what the problems are and high level decision making that direct resources towards solving them. This needs to come as above base support else the base becomes eroded and dysfunctional.

High performing staff at EPA do not have enough upward mobility opportunities. The result is that a percentage of the highest performing staff will typically leave EPA before they are given advancement opportunities. Continued use of programs such as the SES candidate development program, SES/senior management trainings for GS14/15 high performing staff, FEI, and other similar ideas can provide incentive for the highest performing staff to stay at EPA.

Staff should be given every opportunity to participate in high level briefings - even lower level/newer staff. This is how people learn. We should be building the EPA staff of tomorrow, today.

Better communication on principles, priorities, and actual actions that EPA will undertake this FY would enable current staff to better perform their obligations to EPA.

We have world class laboratories that are woefully underfunded and understaffed because of progressive cuts in the Agency both from a fiscal and personnel standpoint. Having more flexibility to attract outside funding through IAGs, CRADAs etc that are a win-win needs to be more broadly encouraged and supported.

EPA is way behind in e-modernization for all our tracking and submittal systems, across all media programs. A wholesale upgrade and movement to e-permitting, e-submittal etc... would revolutionize the EPA and improve our efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability. See previous entry for more information.

Documentation of Agency science (from conception to final product) relies on a smorgasbord of different computer programs that all require the same information but through a different portal. Having a better master program that all in the information goes into and gets collated would be superior and a great efficiency.

There are many ways to do this and there's not nearly enough space here to talk through this. That being said, here are a handful of ideas:

- IPAs with states - do exchanges between state and EPA personnel, and possibly other federal agencies where appropriate
- Engage in regular meetings with states/other federal agencies
- Offer within EPA details across different offices (OGC, OECA) as well as media offices so folks in air can experience how the water office works, for example
- Have a strategic plan that aligns closely with statutory obligations and have a plan which enables compliance with statutory obligations
- Invest in training the EPA management team from first line supervisors (continuing recently started front line management training opportunities and continuing through to the highest level of management)

We should be able to apply for federal grants from other Agencies such as NSF and NIH. This would leverage our infrastructure and would create more bang for the buck for the taxpayer

- Recognize high performing employees appropriately
- Have equity in workplace standards (e.g., if the Agency can afford standing desks, everyone should have the opportunity to get one); everyone's office environment should be equally appropriate
- Give st

The pharma industry has project planning tools that are highly integrated and could be adopted.

??? Budget process limits the ability to conduct long-term spending planning: Opportunities to improve the EPA-internal process to ensure resources get to program offices in a timely manner would reduce inefficiencies.

??? Lack of internal communication from Administrator???'s and AA-Ship Offices: Initiate ???Town halls??'/???All hands??' at the AA-ship level to share information.

??? Lack of political middle management poses challenges to efficiency and effectiveness.

??? Unclear procedures for document review, briefings, and decision-making: Streamline, communicate and follow a consistent protocol; delegate reviews at appropriate management levels.

??? IT Support limitations:

- o Lack of autonomy/ability to manage basic personal settings on computers vs. need for Administrator rights: Having ability to change basic (non-security) settings at a personal level (e.g., browser installation) would be supportive of efficiency/effectiveness

- o Frequency and timing of updates (e.g., Java; patches; badge alert) impedes work productivity: Timing could be adjusted to avoid prime work hours

- o Engage staff in identifying IT needs (e.g., software, hardware, program development, trainings)

- o Continue to support the Microsoft helpline and similar resources

- o Ensure that the most up-to-date versions of software are readily available and deployed to staff

??? Work Assignment/Grant Management processes and procedures: Streamline and ensure that recertification training is relevant to EPA employee needs/responsibilities.

- ??? Provide attention and funding to underfunded programs.
- ??? Listen to states funding priorities and make funding decisions consistent with state/tribe/community needs.
- ??? Encourage State-Federal Employee details (i.e., IPA???)s).
- ??? Ensure sufficient EPA staff to coordinate with State/Tribe/Community/Private Sector counterparts.
- ??? Address/support states in addressing interstate issues.
- ??? Engage/collaborate with broader-based external partners/organizations -recognizing the ???bigger picture?? of EPA??s holistic Mission in addition to collaborating with local/media-driven organizations.
- ??? Enhance funding to external organizations that represent states.
- ??? Prioritize communication materials development for outreach by and to a variety of audiences (e.g., Harmful Algal Blooms group is developing template press releases) to reduce the burden on the stakeholders to develop materials themselves and to increase consistency in messaging of information.

??? Preserve funding for hotlines that serve the public (and others) and support user-friendly design that allows a caller to reach a person (rather than an e-message/menu).

??? Ensure sufficient program funding and staffing: People are needed to provide the services offered by the EPA.

??? Prioritize communication materials development for outreach by and to a variety of audiences (e.g., Harmful Algal Blooms group is developing template press releases) to reduce the burden on the stakeholders to develop materials themselves and to increase consistency in messaging of information.

??? Streamline, communicate and follow a consistent protocol regarding communication materials/document reviews; delegate reviews at appropriate management levels.

??? Provide training to support staff in differentiating between education/outreach and lobbying thus enhancing EPA's ability to effectively communicate with states, tribes, local communities, the regulated community, and the public at large.

??? Enhance depth, detail and resource accessibility on EPA's website.

??? Follow-through on public products: Updating products as necessary and widely notifying stakeholders of the availability of the information/product/tool.

??? EPA is already running at low cost/under budget ??? some programs have done so, historically. This contributes to inefficiency, ineffectiveness, reduction in environmental protections, and ultimately, a cost burden.

??? Budget process limits the ability to conduct long-term spending planning: Any opportunities to improve the EPA-internal process to ensure resources get to program offices in a timely manner would reduce inefficiencies.

??? Support budget decision-making/funding based on needs rather than historical amounts and reduce incentives to increase short-term spending to preserve long-term funding levels.

??? Ideas:

- o Charge permitting fees for EPA direct Implementation permits as is done in the states and in other Agency programs (e.g., Pesticides). This would require addressing the Miscellaneous Receipts Act restrictions but would support the regulated community as well as the program.

- o Support improved access to and ease of e-reporting for regulators and the regulated community.

- o Ensure transition/turn-over planning to preserve institutional knowledge (e.g., develop a program/protocol/process to facilitate this).

??? Invest in robust onboarding, long-term support and training of employees as is often done in the private sector to improve retention and productivity (e.g., Fortune 100 and 500 Companies).

??? E-reporting would improve efficiency by circumventing the need for manually entering data.

??? E-permitting (e.g., electronic form or system that could be used for submissions by an owner/operator or permittee rather than relying pdf or hard copy documents) would make sharing information between operators/permittees and EPA more effective/efficient and would help with legacy record keeping.

??? Encourage and facilitate data sharing across programs, with internal and external entities.

??? More frequent updates of IT infrastructure:

- o Computers

- o Programs (e.g., Concur; Webforms; IGMS)

- o Broken printers

??? Frequency and timing of software updates (e.g., Java; patches; badge alert) impedes work productivity: Timing could be adjusted to avoid prime work hours.

??? Use of consistent software/platforms across the agency to achieve common results.

??? Enhance support for existing technologies and raise awareness of their availability and applicability to our work; ensure new platforms/technologies integrate with existing tools.

??? Support increased interaction via remote communication (i.e., webcam functionality; training and instructions on accessible resources).

??? Recognize and continue existing strong partnerships with Federal and State agencies (e.g., Department of Energy; United States Geological Survey; Department of Agriculture; Source Water Collaborative).

??? Depoliticize interactions and scientific engagement occurring with Federal and State agencies and/or recognize the technical, scientific and non-political nature of much existing collaboration and engagement.

??? Encourage Federal partners to continue existing work that directly benefits or complements EPA programs (e.g., Department of Energy's National Risk Assessment Partnership which has benefits for the Underground Injection Control Program and Office of Air and Radiation responsibilities; multiple United States Geological Survey research initiatives benefit the Office of Water).

??? Strengthen/enhance communication with interagency offices and clarify roles/responsibilities of agencies on particular topics (e.g., Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds ??? National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration):

- o Consulting
- o Decision-making
- o Researching
- o Policy-setting
- o Information sharing
- o Technology-endorsing

??? Support State-to-State partnerships through fiscal, administrative and technical cooperation.

??? Trust and invest in workforce.

??? Accountability/open communication from senior management.

??? E-reporting would: improve efficiency by circumventing the need for manually entering data and support the use of current technologies.

??? To support underfunded programs, charge permitting fees as is done in the states and in other Agency programs (e.g., Pesticides). This would require addressing the Miscellaneous Receipts Act restrictions but would support the regulated community as well as the program.

??? Programmatic/Transitional Shadowing to ensure transfer of institutional knowledge (e.g., Ohio EPA; Michigan).

??? Invest in robust onboarding, long-term support and training of employees as is often done in the private sector to improve retention and productivity (e.g., Fortune 100 and 500 Companies).

Currently the Airline Drinking Water Rule (ADWR) is tightly controlled at the HQ level. Time and time again we see a dictation approach that excludes the regions and the regulated community in implementing the rule. We need a more collaborative approach with the regulated community and we need to be more responsive in making revisions to the ARCs tracking database that airlines use to input data into. In the regions we have encouraged collaboration in a variety of ways both between us and HQ and the regulated community. Legal has gotten involved when HQ interpretations of the regulations are off base. Just one example is where Airlines put planes in the desert until they need them. The current HQ interpretation is that they still fall under the rule since they are listed in their inventory but are also listed as inactive. They want five year self inspections on these aircraft and want us to issue violations. We are rejecting the violations. They just sent a memo telling us not to reject the violations. If a plane is in the desert it does not fall under the rule because it is not serving the public and thus not a drinking water system. Many things were suggested at the last national conference and are in HQ box to implement and that is not a priority for HQ. We need a much more collaborative approach where they share memos before publishing them and ask for our input. The regions are the boots on the ground implementing the rule. HQ is dictating to us and the industry and they are not listening. All we hear is "The regulations say ...". Where is the common sense? Where is the desire to dialogue with us and the regulated community? The airlines have a huge lobby and could bring much weight upon us. We have a great deal of room for improvement in the implementation of this rule. Most of the airlines have worked hard to comply with the rule. We need to do a better job reaching out and communicating and listening. When valid suggestions are made we need to implement them. The ADWR rule is a good rule and has improving water quality for the flying public. We need the rule. We also need to listen and work with the regulated community and the regions. Airlines should not have to take planes out the ADWR inventory when they are inactive in the desert. Let's work to find solutions to this and other issues. This is just one example of how HQ appears deaf to us and the airlines.

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Problem 1: Management has been preventing our move to an electronic concurrence system. As a staff person, I am not privileged to know the true reason why; however, I have been here long enough to know that there is a political interest to keep using paper. Our paper concurrence system is one of the most inefficient parts of our internal administrative process. Solution 1: issue an Order that EPA move to an electronic concurrence system within 12 months, or justify in writing why moving to such a system is not feasible or economical.

Problem 2: Once regulations are promulgated and implemented, any questions, issues, or concerns that arise are handled on a case-by-case basis at the regional level. There is no feedback loop to ensure that rules are improved over time and no sharing of information across regions. Solution 2: implement a process where issues pertaining to the implementation of existing regulation are recorded, shared, and potential solutions proposed.

I have many more problems and solutions, but limited time to share now and there is no "save for later" button on this form.

The current Office of Policy has oversight over publication of all Federal Register Notices, even routine notices. This is a new requirement implemented by this incoming Administration. As a result, we are approaching a 6 MONTH DELAY in issuing ROUTINE FEDERAL REGISTER NOTICES. This will delay our review schedule significantly, and result in missed statutory deadlines, which could potentially place the Administrator in legal jeopardy. This could be easily addressed by allowing the program offices to do their jobs and conduct their own oversight of Federal Register Notices, as was done for many years.

We need better coordination. Specifically, we need a memorandum of understanding or agreement between EPA and each State to ensure that all activities are carried out consistently. It should be a requirement that EPA set up MOUs or MOAs with each State for all programs.

We need to be responsive and invert our "black hole" approach to customer service. I call it the "black hole" approach when customers reach out to EPA to either receive no response, or one that it is not helpful. Or, EPA may suck the customer into a seemingly endless bureaucratic process where it is unclear at the end if any benefit or solution was achieved.

The EPA website and existing blogs provide a wonderful tool for communicating with the public at large. EPA's press office and offices of congressional and intergovernmental affairs have existing tools for working with states, and EPA's tribal programs are among the most advanced in government. These should be utilized to provide customer service.

Push for more State approved programs and delegations, especially for long existing rules (e.g. Underground Storage Tanks). If States do not have the necessary approval, EPA needs to understand why that is and what can be done for the State to achieve program approval. Once this is achieved, then EPA reverts to an oversight role; which requires substantially less resources than implementation.

EPA has a nascent GreenSpark program that can be built upon.

Switch from a time based system to a performance based system. In a performance based system, a person who enters the office on-time and leaves on-time, but without accomplishing any work, would be penalized. Currently, it is not possible to penalize those who do not work if they enter and exit the building according to their scheduled hours. The process to do so is cumbersome (e.g. improvement plans) and ineffective.

There is no forum for communicating shared responsibilities and mutual interests across federal agencies, nor any requirement that I know of to do so... it is left upon the will of the administrators for each agency to seek such opportunities.

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Not having attorney bar licenses being paid for. However, position requires an attorney to be in active and good standing with the bar. Having attorney bar licenses would allow for job to be done for efficiently and effectively.

We have a lot of data systems to use to manage the Agency's business side. For example, there's EAS for contracts which few people master, because it's so complicated. A couple more that I know of are COMPASS and Easy Lite. There's also a separate database for managing grants - IGMS. Then we have People Plus which has improved with time, but still could be streamlined. There's another system for managing controlled correspondence. And there are probably more I don't know about. None of these systems are straightforward. I think it entirely appropriate for someone to take a look at all of these and figure out how to make them more user friendly, maybe even merge some.

More meetings with NGOs to explain the FOIA and eDiscovery process.

More local, state, and federal task force for handling eDiscovery.

Promotion of younger employees to senior management identifying key employees.

Increased paperless environment with the use of iPads and other table technology. Increased wifi at EPA campuses. Increased telework equipment such as additional monitors and docking stations to allow for more teleworking in a professional work like setting.

Conduct eDiscovery training to all of EPA attorneys and staff involved in litigation.

Conduct eDiscovery training to all of EPA attorneys and staff involved in litigation. Expand eDiscovery contract from 5 contractors to 30. Utilize and adopt predictive coding for eDiscovery. Adopt advanced analytics to give a more fuller picture of precase assessment for eDiscovery matters.

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Processes for hiring take too long and are too cumbersome which means that the best qualified candidates are not available by the time hiring is allowed. Recommendation -- streamline Federal Hiring process.

Administrative support organizations (OEI and OARM) are significantly understaffed which impacts the ability of all of EPA to get their work done. Recommendation -- dedicate resources to eliminate backlog in contracts and to help the Agency modernize IT.

Please let first line supervisors initiate termination of employees without explicit OGC approval. We should consult with OGC but not let them decide whether we can proceed and begin process.

Please review every employees' grade level every 3-5 years. An employee should not retain a grade level if they are no longer doing work at that grade level. This is a widespread problem at the agency. I have never seen someone downgraded, nor can a supervisor request a desk audit of an employee.

Modernize our technology and systems to embrace digital collaboration and feedback.

Streamline basic business processes across the Agency. There is no need for each organization to define its own procedures for bankcards, grant management, etc.

Yes.

I can't think of anything.

This isn't easy, but one possibility is extra efforts to hire people who have worked at state EPAs. I have worked at the state level, and you have a different perspective when you have worked there.

We just have to continue our outreach and make it part of our culture. Overall here at EPA, I think our staff is high quality (and improving!), but I don't think our managers are as good. My manager is very good, and his manager is good, but that is atypical here. I think our management needs better and more training. The transition from analyst to manager, which is typical here at EPA, is very hard. We need to train our managers to be better in all ways, especially in working with states, tribes, local communities, the regulated community, and the public at large. Extensive negotiation training for all managers would help accomplish these goals.

Better management would help. I think the SES should be better paid; right now many great managers stay as GS-15s because the pay is not worth the hassle and extra work involved in being an SES. Better management would greatly increase productivity.

Hard to say - it depends.

I don't think we can. I used to work on the state level and budgets in most states are extremely tight. Where I worked, over a period of years there had been a 25-30% reduction in personnel. This is typical of many states. EPA needs to maintain (or increase) its number of personnel to support states our shared environmental protection efforts.

I think we should think very hard about how we recruit and train managers. Good analysts are not necessarily good managers, and many (if not most!) scientists and engineers don't have natural management and people skills. We should look very hard at different models in the private sector of companies that are engineering/science-heavy that have good management. ExxonMobil is very well-run, I think, although you'd have to heavily adapt whatever you found there because they are very conservative and we are liberal. Also, government is not a business. FERC might also be a good example; I think they are better-run than we are.

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Unfortunately, things under the new administration have not improved significantly with the passage of time. We are finding that our projects are not moving due to the organizational processes the new senior staff has put in place. It has become exceedingly difficult to publish FRNs, changes to web pages, etc., This was acceptable for the first several months, but we are now an entire semester into the school year....a freshman in high school or college has to finally learn to trust his teachers, advisors, tutors...to know they can be mentored and move things forward.

Political interference from senior Agency executives; discrediting scientific consensus, restricting scientific research and ignoring scientific evidence on the part of senior Agency executives; pursuit of an entirely political agenda on the part of senior Agency executives

Request Administrator Pruitt to please publish his vision, talk with staff, have town hall meetings and explain his vision for EPA to staff. The staff will come on board. The staff and agency support collaboration with all of our stakeholders including INDUSTRY.

Pursuing objective research, acknowledging scientific evidence, abandoning political agendas

Hands on, customer service, allowing states primacy, leadership and the discretion to make their own decisions.

Pursuing objective research, acknowledging scientific evidence, abandoning political agendas

Hold employees accountable, set your expectations, make them clear, and hold employees accountable.
Reduce printing of manuals, copies for public, etc., Reduce travel, waste, unnecessary expenses. Each office needs discretion, but encourage that within that discretion, they need to tighten their purse strings.
Better support staff, allow technical experts and senior staff to focus on the science. There is a reason you utilize HR Block or a Tax Atty to do your taxes. They are the experts in that field. Treat the employees the same way.
Encourage seasoned employees who have perhaps fallen victim to "this is the way we always do it" to retire to free up salaries and improve morale, but hire talent. Invest in IT and technology where possible and hire new talent who can manage the systems we need to better communicate with States and County regulatory agencies.
Building efficiencies. Require recycling, double-sided printing, the basics. Composting. REDUCE the temperature by only 1-2degree.

Return to following and honoring scientific evidence, research and consensus

Instantaneous reporting and website transparency to the public.

Ask the States and other Federal Agencies what they need, then work on 1-2 priorities to meet those challenges.

Following and honoring scientific evidence, research and consensus

Contracts Office is a mess; they need more people - who have expertise in contracting. They also need a lesson in Customer Service. The misinformation, slowness and general processes/procedures greatly impede getting work done using contractors...who really supplement our FTE a lot.

education of each of these groups about basic principles of government, e.g., Congress makes the laws, Executive implements them. Next, basic understanding of principles of particular regulations and SCIENCE (e.g., cant know what you don't know...there are limitations)

Same as Q2...service to tribes and local communities in particular really do not have very basic understanding of how things actually work.

Lots of security guards standing around chatting with one another; while ONE checks badges, etc. Mere presence of uniforms is not really a deterrent.

Mandatory trainings are proliferating, for every little thing...is this really necessary, esp for things one doesn't even do?

Yes! Maybe it is insufficient resources or generally not having really good IT people, but EPA seems to have the "budget" version of all software...none of them work WELL, For Example, SharePoint has not really worked WELL at EPA. Then there are the multitude of "home grown" or stripped down versions of software for all the basic infrastructure (e.g., PeoplePlus - have never deployed the leave slips self-populating the timecard, FPPS-what a joke!, WebForms-incomplete, not everything there; only some are 'workflow" active; Concur has been broken for EVER re: proper codes and flags) NONE of these are integrated; NONE of them work WELL (crash prone, don't allow for basic flexibilities, etc.). the basic state of play for all the basic business systems is rather pathetic; REALLY!.

Don't expect/direct TSCA to "take care of everything". Presumably, Congress had reasons for passing laws in addition to TSCA to take care of specific things...e.g., overlap with OSHA, other statutes that EPA implements, e.g., CAA, CWA, RCRA, etc.

There is a lack of good mentors at EPA as there has been very little done to implement an official mentor/ mentee relationship (since I came on board there has been a talk about implementing senior fellow/ historian program which should have been there decades earlier), mainly due to managers not being experts in the field they evaluate, this is a serious problem which leads to huge frustration as you get evaluated by someone who doesn't understand your expertise and makes calls on your projects, which make little sense. Also there needs to be clear impartiality procedures as favoritism is a major deterrent to progress.

Trust building based on honesty with firm scientific evidence will convince everyone, it takes many years to change mind set, but faced with scientific evidence most of us come around.

Excellent,open, honest communication and major trust building is our responsibility as public servants.

We need clear scientific evidence based guidance and a common ground between scientists and policy makers to come to a middle ground while protecting human health and environment for our future generations, so a more unified approach to society with many town halls on this topic is essential. All stakeholders must be heard on all sides and then a clear voting process should be implemented from all sections of society to make an informed decision.

Absolutely, we as a office need to be aggressively implementing alternatives to animal testing, which we haven't done yet, while the other regulatory agencies around the world are already implementing and recommending alternatives to animal testing. This is imperative as we are already few years behind the world, throwing more money towards animal testing when there are very good scientifically sound alternatives which are available to choose from and make a sound regulatory decision.

We need more effective and open collaboration between NIH, FDA, NIOSH and other federal and state regulatory agencies through interagency bodies like ICCVAM or ECHVAM (European version) etc.. with partners from university and Industry and general public to be strongly involved in our decisions.

OPP and OPPT have been collaborating with ICCVAM to understand and validate alternatives such as in vitro testing, which needs to become main stream to decrease use of animal testing in US, as it is now around in Europe. There is huge benefit when we use in vitro cells versus animals as they are about 1/10 cost of animal tests and we are also protecting other species with "live and let live moral policy".

My statutory (but non-regulatory) technical assistance program relies on being able to do outreach to the manufacturing and general business sectors. The Product Review process to create educational pieces for the public and others is cumbersome and lengthy, with many unknowns and no straightforward way to obtain answers. I'm in a regional office and our Product Review officer is often unable to get consistent and straightforward answers to questions from his HQ counterparts. There seem to be significant disconnects between the communications folks at HQ and the program offices at HQ with respect to appropriate templates, logos, style, and what content is subject to product review and what isn't. Documents submitted to the process are lost in a black hole. The process needs to be re-examined, streamlined and posted on the Intranet. Product Review officers need to be trained so they can assist program staff. Standard templates for EPA material need to be made available as well as FAQs for content preparers.

To EPA, "better environmental results" usually means measurable outcomes that meet some numeric threshold. This sounds good in theory but often results in tailoring the EPA program so that our programs (via grants, regulation, etc.) achieve numbers at the expense of developing meaningful partnerships. My program provides technical assistance to small and medium sized businesses that aren't able to make the changes in the required one-year time frame, but that doesn't mean the interaction and outreach isn't valuable. We just can't spend the time creating great partnerships when constantly pressured to produce numbers. My solution: give the regions and EPA programs a break on the numbers so we can get out in the field and develop the positive partnerships that will result in real environmental change.

Staff spend too much time in the office and not enough time in the field meeting with the entities listed above to create workable solutions. More travel money and more emphasis on providing customer service. Whatever you do, do not close regional offices. We serve a valuable role as a liaison between national initiatives and help tailor those to the unique needs of the stakeholders in our region.

I'd like to see the Pollution Prevention program (implemented as a result of the P2 Act) integrated with RCRA inspections. The P2 program requires EPA to provide technical assistance to businesses to prevent pollution from being created in the first place. Our work has shown that businesses save considerable money by implementing energy and water efficiency features, and reducing hazardous waste by replacing with less toxic chemicals and making process improvements. Unfortunately, it is viewed as a conflict for RCRA inspectors to work with manufacturers on implementing P2 practices. The P2 program operates separately from RCRA, which makes no sense.

I think EPA does a good job at keeping up with new computers and programs and providing training on new computer systems.

I don't see much overlap. The feds play a vital role in ensuring state and local politics don't remove key environmental protections with changes in state funding and elected officials. In the 27 years and three programs I've worked in, I thought we worked well with the states.

No

Since we have smart cards, all accounts should be accessible via PINs. We should not have to remember so many passwords for all these accounts and constantly have to change them. In DoD, your smartcard allows you to log-in, once you pull it out, you have essentially locked your computer. We should use our smartcards this way to prevent leaving the building without them. Also, the amount of approval we need from our supervisors on every little administrative task is too much. Plus, most of this process isn't even electronic. It's inefficient and arduous just to change a CWS day off (for example). Processes should be more streamlined, electronic, and less burdensome to our supervisors.

It would be nice to be more in touch about upcoming laws/bills and providing input on such developments. I

Perhaps an automated message letting them know comments to the FR have been reviewed. I think acknowledging the public in particular that they have been heard will encourage them to continue connecting with us.

Yes. Less use of electricity in our buildings. Do we really need individual trash cans that have to be emptied every single day? And what is the deal with all the rolls of toilet paper being used to prop open the bathroom doors during cleanings? We could probably use less paper, email storage, and conference lines to save money. An Agency policy about the use of SharePoint might be helpful in improving efficiencies.

Yes! As mentioned above, PLEASE let us use our smartcard for all accounts and end the need for all these passwords that constantly need to change and are easy to forget. We need to maximize the value of SharePoint and improve version control.

We can ensure that there are fewer gaps in protecting human health and the environment. Including other agencies in our regulation plans/processes can provide additional perspective to help us meet needs more effectively.

As mentioned, DoD's use of the smartcard is ideal. EPA can certainly reduce the use of paper, simplify/streamline supervisor approval, and truly adopt an electronic process (for example, docuSign).

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My office relies heavily on review by internal committees. These committees can impede progress and slow the work of OPP. I recommend that existing review committees in OPP be reviewed for need and effectiveness. This is particularly true for conventional chemicals.

Chain of approval and review for outreach communication and public databases is arduous and shows lack of trust between management and staff. Every circumstance may be different, but reducing the amount of review to lower levels would result in quicker completion of tasks.

The practice of reactionary tasks with strict target dates because something is in the media does not always result in the most thought through outcome. If EPA were to increase their communication with the public on how decisions are being developed then it would show the progress in transparency.

OPP is a very insular office in that it is located at HQ in Washington, DC. Staff rarely gets out to discuss pesticide health and safety issues with the public. Our main interactions outside of the office are with agricultural groups and interests. Although important the agriculture is not the only sector we should be establishing good external relationships. I recommend "town halls" with a variety of the public sector (state health officials, state departments of environment, farm groups, etc.) to assess their interests, and concerns with respect to pesticides.

Outreach and communication could be improved and increased in all offices.

OPP has poor relations with the environmental community and would benefit from efforts to reach out to the environmental NGOS to discuss issues before they lead to petitions and lawsuits. The environmental NGOs are representatives of the public at large. Currently, the National Pesticide reform Coalition (NPRC) which includes members from these NGOs meet with us only twice per year for an hour after our twice annual PPDC meetings for all pesticide stakeholders. I recommend more frequent interaction with these groups.

When people call the EPA with a question they are routed around until they give up or 12 calls later reach the person they are need to talk to. This system could be greatly improved to increase the public confidence in the EPA.

OPP is top heavy with management. Our office had 1000 staff in the early to mid 2000s. Since 2008, attrition has reduced our staff to 600 or fewer. However, management has not decreased accordingly. We still have too many top level managers (SES and their deputies). There are now almost 2 deputies for every division director in OPP. One is probably sufficient. Cost savings and efficiencies could be had by at a minimum reducing the number of Deputy Division Directors currently in place and putting them back into production work. This would also save on space as we consolidate as fewer deputies means fewer enclosed individual offices.

Enhancing TSCA's ChemView would reduce costs for small businesses and industry that generally rely on consultants to inform them on what is known and how to comply with TSCA. It would be achievable and marketable to bring ChemView to its full potential in a reasonable timeline (2-3 years).

Electronic labeling is very important to more a effective, efficient, and accountable OPP. We license and label many hundreds of chemicals and thousands of products and keeping track of them and the many changes to labels has been shown to be difficult with paper filing systems. Electronic labeling technology is key to keeping our records current and accurate.

I would like to reiterate that ChemView is a great tool, but needs more resources (human, creative and financially) to achieve the ultimate vision.

Also internal tracking systems for data submitted to the EPA is manually tracked, but with project turn around in an IT age this process could be vastly improved and made efficient.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires knowledge at a local level. OPP is centered in HQ WDC. Could there be a way to partner with the National Resource Conservation Service, growers, states, and local communities to minimize the impacts of pesticides on threatened and endangered plants, animals, and insects? This could reduce the burden that this difficult but important task places on the EPA and USFWS as they struggle to develop an effective approach to pesticide ESA consultation.

Information, including CBI, sharing should be streamlined between states and other federal agencies (FDA, USDA, etc.) to increase the knowledge of chemicals in commerce.

OPP's risk assessment approaches are considered very good by any standard and should be considered by other agency offices.

EPA is the gold standard for chemical risk assessment because of its reliance on data. However, the strong evidence approach does slow things down. More resources should be allocated to increase the quantity of risk evaluations that the public deserve to have conducted.

1071 5/18/2017

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Biopesticides include a reduced data set for registration due to their inherit low toxicity. This is highly beneficial to small companies developing biopesticide products. For many of these companies an increase in data requirements is not financially feasible. Data requirements have been recently increased for toxicology, specially in the area of tolerance exemptions. Biochemical pesticides are subject to PRIA for registration. There is time constrain for review of applications. Review time is being increased due to increased scientific scrutiny and recent policies seeking to subject biopesticides to the same standards held for conventional pesticides with a toxic mode of action. Scientific reviews now have to go through a sequence of review committees outside of one branch or Division. Each branch should maintain its own policies and procedures to handle its own products efficiently. The idea of One EPA undermines efficiency within each Division by creating unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles that eventually hurts industry, consumers and the environment when less biochemical products are developed and less apply for registration.

Industry is an important partner for pesticides. All will benefit greatly from the development of less expensive testing methods. For example, alternatives to animal and human testing are highly desirable. Industry should partner with academia and both should lead the effort in developing testing guidelines acceptable to the Agency. The Agency should not be in charge of developing its own testing guidelines or dictating testing methodologies, but reviewing and approving or adopting them, since this is not a scientific/hands-on-research institution but a regulatory Agency. The Agency should also seek to harmonize more and find more common ground with regulatory procedures for pesticide registration worldwide.

For pesticides, lower the cost of registration which translates in more affordable price for consumers. Facilitate and promote the development of safer insecticides and new technologies. Engage in more delegation to states, communication with, and input from industry and the public.

Partner with the private sector. Maintain the integrity of every branch and Division within the pesticides program. Reduce the layer of management within each Division, simplify the registration process and streamline data requirements to fit the characteristics of the products they represent.

One big problem is the routine meetings with the Human Study Review Board (HSRB or also called the Board)), which meet twice a year, for review and approval of study protocols and study reports of insect repellents tested on humans. Many mosquito repellents miss one year because they can synchronize field testing during mosquito season with HSRB meeting schedule. In order to avoid routine consultations with the Board for of the same type of studies and procedures, a standard operating procedure, approved by the HSRB, could be always followed for all testing and review by the Agency for ethics and science content. The Board should only be consulted with something is new but not on repetitive, routine basis for the same type of material.

We need IT support that views EPA employees as customers, not inmates. The lack of support for remote access and the general lack of competence is ridiculous. I'm a policy analyst: I shouldn't also have to be an IT expert in order to do my work.

In some cases we need more collaboration with FDA. The rule should be revised to clarify jurisdiction of each Agency for products against human health pests, whose definition and function as pesticide & drug often overlap; i.e, lice products.

For pesticides, work more like a private organization would in terms of pesticide registration. Reduce the layer of management within each Division. Maintain the integrity of each Division or Branch. Maintain the regulatory and science personnel working together in one branch or Division. Don't have separate regulatory and science branches or divisions. Partner with industry and academia for their input on science. Streamline and simplify data requirements; they should adhere to the nature/properties/characteristics of the chemicals within each branch or Division; Streamline and simplify registrations process and steps (example, eliminate routine and repetitive joint reviews between EPA and HSRB when it is not needed).

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The HR process is broken. My Position Description (PD) hasn't been modified in 14 years. I do 15% of what the PD describes. The 85% balance is more complex, broader in scope, and requires more responsibility managing health and safety of others.

With the attrition at EPA less people are doing more work and a broader variety of work. The need to shift focus more frequently has a significant cost in working efficiently.

Having an adequate budget for meeting the obligation under the various Statutes that the US EPA is responsible for administering. Having an annual budget at the beginning of the fiscal year so that we can give the states we work with answers to their question about grant amounts. Often their state budget relies on Federal funds passed through EPA. Continuing resolutions automatically create significant uncertainty at the state level for on going work.

Face time with our state, Tribal, local community and regulated communities. Physically located near enough to these groups to allow for personal interaction. Much like what EPA Region 10 does with state operation offices.

US EPA working directly with our State and Tribal partners sharing out strengths in Research and Development, our labs for analysis etc. But also recognizing and working with State and Tribal assets for monitoring and analysis. Sharing missions and the information we carefully obtain. Also, collaboration between federal partners on achieving common goals for protection of human health and the environment.

Consistent use of Adobe Connect for meetings (e.g., All Staff). This will allow for 1) more effective participation of employees not physically present for the meeting (e.g., teleworking staff) and 2) recording of the meetings for future reference. For example, audio/video recordings of trainings/workshops can be posted on the Intranet for future reviewing by employees who attended and/or viewing by employees who may not have been able to attend.

Electronic signature for Discharge monitoring reports (DMR). The ability to submit electronic DMRs

See above, we already do a lot of work together achieving a mutual interest and goal, but we have unique roles to play. They offer synergy in meeting our shared goals of protecting human health and the environment.

We set as a goal at least bi-weekly calls with State program managers to share developments within EPA and learn of developments within the state or tribal program. The focus is media specific and is meant to keep our communication channels open and effective.

We participate in 'inter-entity' meetings with State, Federal, Tribal representatives to talk about who is funding various infrastructure projects. It helps to prevent confusion and redundant funding. Great for efficiency, accountability, and cost reduction.

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1. HQ makes all of the funding decisions for grants, but the regional personnel provide all of the day to day project management to communities and states. More resources (funding and FTE) and authorities should be given to the regions who perform the work. 2, Administratively, the maxiflex and people plus system do not "talk" to each other such that time and attendance data needs to be submitted in twice in two identical but separate systems.

1. Provide more Brownfields 128(a) grants to states. The number of new tribes that are entering the program each year takes much needed funding from state agencies that cover large geographic areas and large populations. 2. Allow the regional offices more control over funding decisions for grants and contracts. The regional office are much more aware of which communities and programs are most in need of assistance and can use the funds most productively/efficiently.

Allow the regional offices more control over funding decisions for grants and contracts. The regional office are much more aware of which communities and programs are most in need of assistance and can use the funds most productively/efficiently.

Yes. Hire more scientists and engineers in the regional offices. All direct work with states and communities to protect human health occurs at the regional level. Reduce the number of managers. The employee to supervisor ration is very low and should be increased such that there are more employees reporting to less supervisors. Some sections have only 5-6 staff supervised by 1 person. 8-12 seems more reasonable. Encourage more sharing of federal vehicles and portable monitoring equipment.

Allow employees to receive and respond to emails on a smart phone. Currently, our EPA laptops are heavy and clunky and more work could be performed when commuting by train if we could respond to messages on our personal telephones.

The state agencies in Region 5 have experienced severe cuts. The regional staff is vital to assisting the states, where their programs have been decimated.

Have a minimum retirement age and improve scientific integrity by only promoting scientists and engineers to oversee other scientists and engineers. All managers need better technical backgrounds.

I work in the [REDACTED B6] program, and this answer is very specific to that program: we spend an awful lot of our time chasing suspensions from our submitters - fifteen days is the standard, and it often happens that there are six, eight, ten suspensions sought during a review. Each may require several calls to set up, and enter into our software. It seems to me that we would save a lot of everyone's time by giving an automatic six month suspension to any submission which did not get immediate approval, and to put the onus on the submitter to request any extensions. My branch chief has noted that this is NOT what is contemplated by the statute, though!

I think chemical regulation is appropriately a national program.

My particular program [REDACTED B6] has a big information provision requirement, for letting people understand how to submit and whether they need to. I have a feeling that our web site could do more to enable people to get that information relative to their needing to call us. I think our web service is pretty good, but it seems to me it could be better.

We have a system, in [REDACTED B6], under which approvals are chemical-specific. A result is that sometimes chemically and toxicologically indistinguishable materials face substantially different regulatory outcomes. Now that we have, under Lautenberg, and at least theoretical ability to walk back prior approvals which were not wise, it seems we might be able to establish regimes for clusters of near-identical materials, and not have to review each with great labor. Bio-fuels are an example, and the wishes of the Soap and Detergent people are worth thinking about.

I'm not at all up on new technologies, so not useful here. By the way, I don't feel any need to be anonymous here: I'm [REDACTED B6] and if anyone thinks my ideas are interesting I am happy to talk.

When I was at FDA, we contracted with State food and drug agencies to accomplish inspection, etc. for us. It seems like it would be worthwhile to look at FDA interactions with the States and see if we can use it as a model. Some countries have been using other countries' approval processes ('if approved in two OECD states, we can accept') - I doubt we want to go that far, but more careful look at what is approved in Europe, China, etc., might do us some good.

Not really

In ORD, the "matrix" is an unnecessary level of management that provides little added value to the work being conducted but adds significant time burdens to researchers and managers. As an example, many additional meetings are needed simply to communicate up the two different management chains (Labs/Centers/Organizations vs. National Research Programs). Additionally, there are conflicts in priorities between the two management chains, and individual staff have a difficult time navigating these issues. My recommendation would be to merge the two management chains and potentially reduce the number of people in these roles.

There are many administrative burdens that could make EPA staff much more efficient. For example, (1) All training should be done through one website only (e.g., the EPA Skillport site), (2) IT systems should be integrated to the extent possible (e.g., financial databases, presentation/report clearance forms), (3) the number of signatures / approvers should be greatly reduced and the roles of each signer should be made very clear.

Another issue is that the organizational structure that separates out functions such as environmental information, quality assurance, contracting, etc. has resulted in additional burden on staff because these separate organizations act more as internal "auditors" rather than do-ers or helpers. Rather than helping staff do things right the first time, they require staff who are not as informed as they are on these processes to do the work, and then come back to them with critiques and complaints. This makes all the processes take longer than they should, is very inefficient, and creates a negative work environment and animosity between the organizations.

My suggestion would be to make it easier to partner with states, tribes, local communities and the private sector. We do a lot of this already but it is often informal and falls under the radar. Find ways to make it easier to find partners within these sectors, share funding in both directions, and share information within EPA about the work. The Regional Applied Research Effort (RARE) program is a great way to fund timely work between EPA regions, EPA ORD and states, local communities, and tribes. This program brings local or state concerns to the attention of EPA researchers, and allows all parties to craft research efforts to investigate the problem in more detail and find workable solutions. This is a small program now, but additional funding could help enhance this great program!

It would be good to have some central points of contact so that when individual EPA staff are contacted they know who to forward the request to, someone who can make sure the request does not fall through the cracks. In my office, we get more requests than we can handle, but I am not sure if our managers up the chain are aware of this.

Yes, please see above comments.

As a scientist within ORD, there are multiple administrative burdens that are faced by myself and my colleagues that directly impact our ability to do science. We must enter record, and submit time; purchase equipment and supplies; serve as contracting officer representatives and project officers on contracts and agreements (reviewing and championing not only technical content, but administrative issues as well); conduct market surveys; etc. and so forth; before we can do our jobs as scientists. The administrative efficiencies that are supposedly in place only help to a slight degree, and that depends on the staff member(s) we encounter when we take on these "other duties as assigned." Administrative support in ORD does not "support" doing science. Administrative support "supports" doing administrative tasks (and then only minimally at times, again, depending on who you receive to assist with support). Scientists are still charged with getting the work done. The scientific and technical staff are held accountable. We must overcome the administrative obstacles first, then we must do the science we were hired to do, in order to be successful at our jobs.

If you want to increase engagement, interaction, and collaboration with States, Tribes, local communities, and the private sector, then let scientific and technical staff work with their counterparts within those entities. Too many times senior administrators/managers set up roadblocks and obstacles that prevent scientific and technical staff from working/collaborating with their counterparts (other scientific and technical staff) at the State, Tribal, local community, and private sector level. Senior administrators should spend more time determining how to overcome obstacles and tear down roadblocks, instead of building them.

Letting scientific and technical staff work directly with their States, Tribal, local community, regulated community counterparts, and the public at large, would be a big step in providing the customer service necessary to support our compatriots and these regulated entities. ORD has a technical support program (TSP) that was developed with the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER; now the Office of Land and Emergency Management, OLEM) years ago. That program put scientific and technical staff in direct contact with Agency staff requiring the scientific support. It did wonders for supporting the Agency and getting the job done. Unfortunately, the program was only applied to the Superfund effort. It should have been provided to all Agency efforts. That way science would be provided directly to those who use it, directly to the decision makers. Too many times we are faced with administrative and managerial obstacles that put up "roadblocks" to getting the science where it needs to go (to those that will use it; to the decision-makers).

Bureaucracy! There are way to many levels of administration in the way of getting the job done, and getting the job done efficiently and effectively. Too many obstacles in the way of getting the job done; the job of providing sound science to the decision-makers. We need to streamline processes; from funding to administrative burdens. People use Superfund as an example. The Act, the premise, had merit, but the end goal was usurped by others (and I will stay off of my soapbox here), and it became a gold mine and delay tactic to some individuals, while those that were (are) directly impacted and needed (and still need) answers received only limited attention and limited funding. We must get the job done! We must be allowed to provide sound science to those impacted by environmental issues (local communities and the regulated public).

We need to think outside the box in order to address this question. We need to evaluate technologies and strategies developed to address other situations and see what can be applied to resolve the environmental problem(s) at hand. The use of granulated carbon and nanomaterial technologies in certain fields will likely become important remediation technologies in the future. Developing flux-based site management approaches should be seen as inventive ideas and not overlooked by those that favor a more "black and white" concentration based management strategy. Again, thinking outside of the box, developing or adopting novel approaches will likely be key to solving future environmental issues that face the nation.

Easily. I've talked incessantly about administrative burdens that scientific and technical staff are faced with. These administrative burdens and roadblocks can be obstacles to the success of a particular approach or strategy. We need to minimize the administrative burden on scientific and technical staff (perhaps by pooling limited resources of state and federal agencies and addressing administrative burdens with those individuals wanting to work on that problem) and, in turn, provide support to the scientific and technical staff wanting to address the issue and provide sound science to the decision-makers.

I will need to think about this question more fully, and look at practices across my local organization and then office-wide, and determine what could be adopted more corporately across the Agency to improve our efficiency, increase accountability, and reduce costs.

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The entire Agency should comply with the 2011 Correspondence Manual - no exceptions - not even for the Administrator or the Regional Administrators. This would save a LOT of time and effort spent on stupid correspondence issues that could instead be used for work that matters. Also, all organizations could become more efficient if supervisors were matched to their units based on knowledge of the program and personal management strengths. I have a supervisor that not only doesn't know or understand my section's program, she is a terrible fit because her education, experience and skills are in an area totally unsuited and unrelated to the one I'm working in. In the end she wastes a ton of time with when the employees could work better without her.

In FIFRA (pesticides) we are required to publish in the FR a "Notice of receipt" when the Agency receives a petition for a new active ingredient or new use of an active ingredient. This action require a 30 day comment period. I would suggest moving this activity to the website and removing the 30 day comment period. Reduces costs and burden to staff in OPP and FRC. .

1081 5/18/2017

Insufficient funding

EPA has an excellent record of partnering with states, local communities, tribes, and the private sector; with many opportunities for such interactions. Reduced funding prevents exploiting the many additional opportunities available.

More emphasis on educating the regulated community as to why regulations are necessary, and the long-term economic and quality-of-life benefits these regulations (which are based on the best science in the world) provide to society. Also, better education of the regulated community of the long-term negative economic consequences of maximizing short-term economic gain at the expense of the environment. In the long term, damaging the environment is very costly - this has been proven over and over again. Take Superfund, for example: billions of dollars have been spent to clean up environmental messes caused by industries that wanted to maximize short-term economic gains and resisted regulations to protect the environment. Those short-term economic gains were insignificant in many cases to the clean-up costs incurred later. States, tribes, local communities, and the majority of the public at large are very supportive of the EPA and believe the EPA is currently providing unsurpassed customer service.

Not really. It is naive to think this is the first time EPA has considered improving its efficiency. Only those unfamiliar with the Agency are unaware that improving efficiency and reducing costs while trying to address the increasing demands for adequate environmental protection due to population growth and industrial expansion has been a long-standing goal. The last several years have required that more be done with fewer resources, so increased efficiency has been an absolute top priority of the Agency.

Not that I am aware of. EPA has a long-standing history of utilizing the latest state-of-the-art technology to address environmental problems, and has been very progressive in adopting processes from the business community that have been shown to improve efficiency. As a Federal agency that is constantly under public scrutiny, transparency and accountability are much greater than for the private sector, and extreme efforts have been made to continue to improve these factors when possible.

One of the major impediments to maximizing cross-agency and Federal-to-state interaction and cooperation is the notion that each agency or entity must limit their scope of activity to a narrow interpretation of what is explicitly required under the laws that pertain to that agency. For example, the EPA regulates pesticides, and the USFWS regulates endangered species, but there is a high degree of commonality and interaction between these two areas. A more "big-picture" view that would allow consideration of areas that indirectly (but substantially) have a bearing on the core mission of the agency (and this applies to the state-Federal relationship too) would allow for much more efficient and cooperative solutions to environmental issues, and would reduce redundancy of effort for areas that are closely related environmentally but are regulated under different statutory authorities.

None that I am aware of.

Have a better records management training process that holds ongoing events or have activities reminding folks how and what to mark as records so we aren't stuck filing paper or email records for several hours upon leaving the agency.

Have better cross training/succession planning and knowledge transfer of employees' work (via different avenues like short video interviews, employee panels or round tables, white papers on key things they want to share or that they've learned, SharePoint sites or informal lunch n learns, who have historic and valuable knowledge and experiences to share with others before they leave the agency.

First of all, don't let politics get in the way of us doing our jobs and doing them well. Everyone deserves clean air, water and land and should not bare disproportionate negative environmental health impacts because of the denial of global warming or climate change. Whatever one believes is the cause, different abnormal things are happening- more droughts, more floods, more insect diseases like lyme disease from ticks, more negative impacts on water from pesticides that are harming bees and monarchs and other animals in the oceans, and more poor people who are negatively impacted from them - Hurricane Katrina, droughts in the west, and other examples. Support more resources for trust-building, community-based, consensus, facilitation and partnership trainings focusing on better more effective and efficient ways to get work done by investing in areas like conflict prevention and resolution training, alternative dispute resolution, appreciative Inquiry, along with cultural competence and social equity, and train not only more EPA staff, but also invite states, tribes and local communities and the private sector to attend and build capacity in rural and urban communities to better understand different points of view and how to listen to reach mutually beneficial human health and environmental results, which will in turn help build stronger relationships, safer and more sustainable communities.

Again, support more resources for community-based, consensus, facilitation and partnership trainings or meetings or job shadowings etc. focusing on better more effective and efficient ways to meet our different customers' needs by investing in areas like conflict prevention and resolution training, alternative dispute resolution, appreciative Inquiry, along with cultural competence and social equity, and train not only more EPA staff, but also invite states, scientists, tribes and local communities and the private sector (like they do on the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council) to attend and build capacity in rural and urban communities to better understand different points of view and how to listen, leading to better customer service that reaches mutually beneficial human health and environmental results, which will in turn help build stronger relationships, safer and more sustainable communities.

Create better on the ground marketing of successes and benefits of EPA program campaigns via the regional offices, and bring back grant workshops and the Community Involvement Training that was cancelled, and do a better job marketing benefits of voluntary programs like Pollution Prevention, Trash Free Waters, Reducing food waste, Energy Star or Grant programs like Environmental justice, urban waters, brownfields or environmental education grants with nonprofits, schools, foundations and local business and industry and other organizations, and continue to keep educating youth as well as new immigrants about environmental health risks and also how to save money by doing things like conserving energy and water etc.. so they in turn are more aware and making more healthier choices that also are better for their wallets too.

Yes teach more employees how to better use the One Drive and organize their files and schedules so they aren't wasting time looking for files or having 10-15 different versions of the same document floating around.

Have better streamlined intranets with calendars of major activities or meetings going on to avoid double booking and improve the quality of internal communication. Have better communication from Headquarters on upcoming travel to regions so we are aware of and can consult on visits from the Administrator or others and are in the loop vs. left out and/or blindsided by the media.

Have better leadership investment in partnerships and MOAs and funding and resource sharing amongst different federal agencies. Devote more staff at EPA and other fed. agencies to Smart Growth, Environmental Justice, Conflict Prevention and Resolution, Community based work, and sustainable communities work like contracts and grants and technical assistance to both rural and urban communities of all backgrounds. Get the Corps of Engineers to be more involved and sensitive to tribal treaties and rights and cultures and support more climate and environmental and community-based research and development and practical application of new ways of doing things that help people, animals, and the environment. Help work with other federal state, tribal and local agencies on cross training for different more energy efficient green jobs from areas that were traditionally unsustainable and unhealthy like mountain top mining, or hydraulic or horizontal fracturing, or paper mills, etc.. .and invest in joint programs that support more sustainable, jobs like solar, wind and hemp vs paper production and geothermal and give better incentives to organizations and groups that apply for funding or technical assistance.

Yes. There are several excellent examples of EPA, states and community partnership projects that are part of the LEAN/Kaizen "Process Excellence" work which is what Region 7 calls it that would be wonderful examples of showing how they came together to define cumbersome processes and make them more efficient and effective, along with Conflict prevention and resolution examples of using appreciative inquiry approaches in low income and minority communities and reaching mutually beneficial outcomes, such as Proctor Creek in Georgia and Hinckson Creek in Missouri.

Better environmental results can be achieved by partnering with States and Tribes for EPA funded projects that require reviews under the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 Consultation. This law obligates EPA to consult with the State Historic Preservation Officers and the Tribal Historic Preservations Officers and, the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation as necessary. EPA should enter into Programmatic Agreements under NHPA Regulations, 36 CFR 800.14 with SHPOs and THPOs and the ACHP for nationwide application in three EPA grant programs including the (1) Safe Drinking Water Act State Revolving Fund, (2) the Brownfields Assessment/Targeted Cleanups grant program and (3) the CWA Section 319 Non-Point Source Grant Program (but not SRF funding). Such PAs would assure the ACHP that EPA is meeting its obligations under this important law that protects our nation's historic resources and artifacts. Without PAs for these grant programs, EPA staff and management spend untold amounts of time working with SHPOs/THPOs on projects where the state or tribes is actually the proponent of projects, which are merely funded with federal EPA funds. The federal funding is the trigger that compels EPA to do the consultation with the SHPO/THPOs. Because these three environmental programs frequently involve active construction projects, historic resources can be affected and NHPA 106 consultations become necessary. Unfortunately, you may have heard that the NHPA has no statutory or regulatory means to delegate the consultation from EPA to the states or tribes. The Programmatic Agreement opens another way to essentially delegate the consultation work to the state/tribes. The three environmental programs, mentioned above, basically give money to the States and eligible tribes. It would be much faster, more efficient use of human resources for the states and tribes to conduct the NHPA consultations with their own SHPOs and THPOs under a Programmatic Agreement with EPA. This would reduce need for EPA's involvement to situations where projects involve complex consultations with a SHPO/THPO or the state/tribe would seek EPA's assistance. EPA would maintain oversight of these environmental programs through the grant process and the Programmatic Agreements. Periodically, EPA could review the grantees' NHPA performance. Presently, EPA has a 1990 Programmatic Agreement for the CWA SRF with the SHPO/THPOs. It is working extremely well to have almost all the NHPA consultations conducted by the state CWA people, which saves EPA resources. The reason EPA does not have Programmatic Agreements for these three other programs, is because it would take time to negotiate them. If the PAs would be established, they would be permanent, state and tribal projects would go faster, EPA would be out of the way, while state/tribal program folks would be talking to their own SHPOs/THPOs, in general. EPA would save countless hours and resources at the Regional level in consulting with SHPOs and THPOs under these environmental programs.

See answer to Q.2. It is equally valid to say this would provide better customer service.

See answer to Q2. It would cost a little up front to negotiate the three PAs, but it would save significant resources in long-run and many projects would not get bogged down with EPA because state/tribe would do the project and the NHPA consultation, which is a much for efficient use of everyone's resources.

In the last 8 years or so, one of the biggest barriers at EPA has been the ridiculously poor and ineffective Information Technology (IT) systems/services, networks, applications, patches, IT band-aides, pushes, both computer hardware and poorly designed software/applications that we're forced to use. I could write a book on this subject; yet, I won't!!! EPA's OEI management, operations, OEI's contracts and IT systems ALL need immediate oversight and investigation. There's no doubt BILLIONS of dollars have been wasted in the past 8 years since EPA's IT contracting went external to the lowest bidder!!! EPA's IT systems are beyond cumbersome; 25-40% of staff time is now wasted in limbo trying to use antiquated hardware and software. applications that don't work or respond. Come on EPA, NASA had the IT technology to put a man in space 50 years ago! For instance, having our EPA ID serve as our computer "smart card" for network entry has been one the worst ideas ever conceived and then implemented! The contractors who design, implement, and service these horrible systems are poorly trained as well! The EZTECH desk jockeys seem to be pulled off the street, paid about minimum wage, and, sadly, too often have no knowledge nor power to fix what's at the root of the debacle and they dislike the tangled mess as well. It's a total swamp!!! Yet EPA continues to pursue tunneling deeper into mucky rabbit holes. In recent years, IT services have been so POOR that it became necessary for OEI (or the IT contractor) to launch an internal "advertising" campaign to inform staff to "STAY CALM" new computers are coming...OEI is long overdue for an Inspector General Investigation!!!

REWARD WHAT YOU WANT! All staff that is permanently hired by EPA should have served in the private sector for at least 3-5 years before joining EPA. This should be a requirement for nearly all professional positions! Unfortunately, in some ranks at EPA, there is a type of "white hat" mentality or arrogance that overcomes them: "We're the good guys and anyone from industry is untrustworthy or dirty."

Make EPA managers/staff listen, engage and talk to real people instead of farming out these responsibilities to external contractors. This needs to happen on a daily basis not just 2-3 times a year. Make EPA's upper management go to public meetings and set there for many hours and/or days to listen and respond. I've seen too many EPA managers/staff who want to remain/hide behind their desks/keyboards, avoiding getting out so they can remain in their comfy offices/jobs that require little extra time/effort.

EPA has had a long history of hiring young people directly from the Peace Corp (lacking any private sector experience.) While these are nice folks, they lack real-world perspective and tangible achievements. There's a hiring loophole that permits EPA to hire Peace Corp volunteers directly without advertising the position and/or without open & fair competition. This practice has led EPA to filling its ranks becoming lop-sided with returning Peace Corp volunteers. This practice should be discontinued. Another poor hiring practice of EPA's is that too often professional and management positions are listed without requiring a college education! Yes, you read that correctly! For instance, I've personally known of several managers and other staff (GS-14-15), without college degrees. Furthermore, some of these HS grads have supervised others who've earned Masters or PhDs. Yes, you read that correctly, a high school grad supervising professionals with advanced degree. This inane practice of promoting + rewarding unqualified staff as has led to many untold inefficiencies and downright stupid decisions. Sad to say, this is legendary in some offices. Current EPA managers will likely not admit to this is truth as it eased their burden. I know it as full truth, as a former supervisor who was forced to do this as well. Coming from the private sector, I was appalled by this internal EPA practice when I discovered it happening! This was done to hire and promote favorites, friends and streamline hiring of external candidates. Most recently, I know for a fact that within the last 1-2 years the Air Office has advertised at least two management positions that required NO college education!!! In fact, a high school grad applied for one of these management positions and was an "acting" manager. Yes, you read this correctly!

Much like the Obama-care website fiasco, EPA's IT services (+ website) are horrible! While I am not the IT expert to recommend the latest + greatest emerging "IT Best Practices", yet, I do know when something is wasteful, cumbersome and not working nor communicating properly! Please bring in some real-world tech gurus to dismantle EPA's OEI network and tangled web of IT gobbledygook that we've been forced to endure! BETA TEST ALL EPA applications and websites BEFORE launching them!!! Integrate the systems and databases. Get RID of OLD databases and applications (i.e. Forms and Skillport) EPA's online training is some of the worst ever conceived or launched; it's embarrassing and often like a throwback to 1940s. EPA spends money on that training, really????? PLEASE, advance into the 21st Century. Get real-world feedback from people on the street (focus groups) about EPA's user-unfriendly website and poor public interfaces.

This is tough because no one wants to identify genuine redundancies nor cut their budget--it risks their careers/jobs. You'll never get a straight answer from some offices/people. Yet there's so much redundancy across all levels it's nonsensical. Reward "Lean Machines". Engage Universities MBA/Masters candidates or industry assn. (i.e. IEEE) teams to solve and evaluate government programs as case studies or thesis. Create public forums that evaluate government programs and puts them on display--like TED Talks and/or a "Shark Tank" panel. Establish "Blue Ribbon" cross-sectional workgroups or committees with contributors and collaboration between Federal, State and Private Industry sitting at the same table on a regular long-term basis. Invent a much-needed tonic or pills for courage/backbone. I hesitate to say it, but, more GAO Reports, Frontline investigations, IG investigations and external evaluations could be helpful. Yep, even whistleblowers can be an asset and have a key role to play in re-thinking "government systems". Highlight the BEST of CLASS then replicate it in other government agencies (like adopt NASA systems at EPA--lol) Streamlining and co-sharing contracts, technology, purchases, expenditures, conferences and infrastructures should be considered. CUT the RED TAPE that strangles so much of government and generates tons of unnecessary paperwork at all agencies!

Firstly, 360 evaluations of all managers need to be mandatory! It's too easy for management to spin slanted/positive tales out of total messes. Some folk need to be re-assigned and/or re-evaluated by external unbiased peers and/or review committees. EPA's management is often too risk adverse and usually prefers ONE viewpoint at the table. The government must set up a different value/reward/incentive system for its managers/staff. SAVING MONEY needs to be rewarded instead of spending/dumping all the funds by September 30. It must be easier to offload unproductive dead weight (not popular to say out loud). There should be a 3-year probationary period (instead of one year.) for new hires. The practice of "forever tenure" should be out the window. Private sector rotations should be mandated for everyone. Unfortunately, changing the philosophy/viewpoint/minds/hearts of people/staff is not so easy nor fast. Make some activities mandatory: like managers and upper level supervisors must actually meet with the private sector on a daily/weekly basis. Employ and embed Futurist Visioning Strategists as key DRIVERS of how to lead and conduct business. Create a "Snoop Dog Loophole Team" that snuffs out loopholes and antiquated systems/procedures. Establish "Pipeline Reports" to forecast/envision developments/concepts and breaking issues coming down the pike-- this should be mandatory practice. I've seen too many in government who keep their heads in the sand, AVOID external meetings with the private sector (the media as well) like NO NEWS is GOOD NEWS. There are perfect storms brewing somewhere all the time, pulling your head out the sand and getting a few grains of sand in your eyes should be rewarded! Top 10 PREDICTIONS of future topics should be welcomed, fostered and rewarded.

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1086 5/19/2017

The awarding and management of grants could be streamlined and made more efficient. Many of the requirements are related to the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, but it seems that there are processes within EPA's grants policies that lead to inefficiencies in grants competition and grants management. EPA's grants management and competition processes should go through the Lean process to identify inefficiencies and redundancies. Current practices make it difficult for applicants that are new to federal grants to have a shot at getting an award. Additionally, from a grants management perspective, EPA's electronic records systems do not meet the threshold for records retention so we have to still rely on paper files. OGD started an e-records project but it seems to have stopped.

Just too much management and micromanagement. Do we really need all of these deputy positions, especially within the regions.

EPA needs to build upon our excellent relationship with state and stakeholder organizations ??? ECOS, NACAA, AAPCA, ASTSWMO, API, AWEA, Edison Electric Institute, AWWA, etc. EPA???'s various media offices already have strong relationships with these and many other stakeholders, whom we engage with whenever we make major policy decisions. The current administration would be well served to listen to the voices of ALL states. EPA could do a better job of coordinating efforts with states and local on compliance assistance and enforcement. Eliminating OECA would completely run counter to EPA???'s ability to accomplish this and cooperative federalism. Also, it???'s doing things like this that undercut EPA???'s ability to effectively work with stakeholders to accomplish our shared responsibilities of protecting human health and the environment (<https://insideepa.com/daily-news/epa-budget-plan-could-require-four-fold-fee-increase-vehicle-makers>). For local communities, EPA could do a better job of working with local groups to promote the importance of continued environmental protection and how it does not hinder economic development (e.g., GDP has increased 153% since 1980, while emissions from the six criteria pollutants has decreased by 65%).

One way to push for greater environmental results on the air side is to push for cap and trade legislation to deal with CO2 emissions, and other hazardous air pollutant emissions that contribute to NAAQS nonattainment. This framework was used to great success to address acid rain.

No opinion

We need to improve our websites and do a better job of telling the story of the continued importance of protecting human health and the environment. We need to share our data on our website, unless it is proven inaccurate or false. This includes maintaining our world-renowned climate change websites and data. When there is strong consensus in the scientific community that global warming is happening and it is influenced by human activity, it sends a false message to the American public and international community when EPA removes these websites. Ignoring climate change is dangerous to the coastal communities that are already feeling the impacts of climate change (and others impacted by more severe storms/droughts), and it puts American workers at a disadvantage economically when we ignore the rapidly growing renewable fuels industry (over 370,000 people employed in solar energy compared to about 70,000 in coal). Likewise, many of the visual signs of pollution have been addressed (no more burning rivers or choking air), which gives many citizens the false impression that our job is done. However, much of our work is still vitally important and saves lives. Thousands of people die prematurely every year from air pollution and over 40% of the population lives in areas of nonattainment. We need to do a better job of communicating this effectively, and that starts with our websites. Finally, we need to maintain our strong presence in the regions. Historically our regional offices have been the most under-staffed and proposing to reduce our regional presence is counter-productive to cooperative federalism.

No opinion

EPA should continue to utilize Lean to identify inefficiencies and to seek process improvements, <https://www.epa.gov/lean>. I think this would be highly beneficial to the regions, who tend to be operating with less but can be more important in our interactions with states and communities. Also, reviewing our regulations periodically to identify inefficiencies, while ensuring they are legally sound and protective of human health/environment, will be beneficial. EPA does need to do a better job of this when introducing new regulations. However, an arbitrary removal of 2 regulations for every 1 new one is not helpful to the American public. This also will likely hinder economic growth by adding further uncertainty to businesses.

Get rid of unnecessary internal programs reduce other internal programs. These are programs such as internal communication, best places to work, process improvement (which in most cases produces nothing). Reduce the laboratory cost by reducing the number of laboratories to possibly a few strategically places labs. Could also look into partnering with other agencies for shared labs.

I think EPA could take more advantage of mobile technology; especially if there is a way to improve our network capabilities without sacrificing security. I find that when I'm not directly connected to EPA's network (i.e., at my EPA desk), it can be extremely slow to access various EPA networks, which can make it less efficient to work from home even though nearly all of my work is through the computer.

Further expand the use of O365 in eliminating the need for Shared Drives such as the F and H

I think it comes down to communication, especially when it relates to enforcement or compliance assistance. We have strong partnerships with states and their various organizations, but the one thing they tell us time after time is, "no surprises." Most states appreciate what we do and rely on us, but it undercuts this relationship when they are not consulted on EPA actions. I think EPA already does a solid job of working with federal agencies where we have shared responsibilities (such as with DOE and DOT on fuel efficiency standards; NOAA and USGS on the Chesapeake Bay; etc.). I think the new EPA leadership should take this opportunity to meet with the offices that have shared responsibilities with other federal agencies and learn from them.

Reduce the laboratory cost by reducing the number of laboratories to possibly a few strategically placed labs. Could also look into partnering with other agencies for shared labs.

Again, take this opportunity to understand EPA's Lean Practices, <https://www.epa.gov/lean>. Senior leadership should also reach out to the agencies that are typically at the top of the Employee Viewpoint Survey - NASA, GAO, FERC and learn from them. Also, thank you for this opportunity to provide our ideas to the new leadership - there are a lot of brilliant minds at EPA and hopefully this is beneficial to you.

No opinion

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-Most of my duties require concurrences, which are all paper-based. Perhaps concurrence packages including signatures could be processed electronically? This could be done via a sharepoint site, where the person requesting the concurrence posts the docum

CaseMap. CID-HQ purchased licenses for a database program called CaseMap. It is a LexisNexis product that was developed for attorneys (not agents). CID management pushed this program onto the field staff and required that it be used to justify the \$70,000 (approximate cost) price tag. The first reason given was that the US Attorney's office used it and wanted our cases in that format. The US Attorney's Office does not use CaseMap. The program is very cumbersome and not user-friendly, and the cost way exceeds any advantage used to justify the needless expenditure of funds we desperately need to run our organization.

There are not enough State/Local/Tribal criminal investigators to do the work CID does. The "ramp up" time to get the State/Local partners to the point they could begin to investigate environmental crimes would be measured in years. And, there are State/Local partners who don't have the money or desire to investigate environmental crimes. They are too busy chasing pedophiles, murders and drug dealers to deal with these types of crimes. In an ideal world they would, but simply don't have the time or resources.

-Sharing of contacts between EPA and State partners for various outreach activities (State primacy?)?

We do a good job now.

-See suggestions made under Q1. Reduce costs and inefficiencies by doing more business electronically, using available tools, like sharepoint.

Yes. EPA-OCEFT has a section called Professional Integrity and Quality Assurance (PIQA). That group has a GS-15 Special Agent in Charge and at least three agents at the GS-14 pay grade. I believe OPM requires a GS-15 to supervise more than three subordinates in order to justify a GS-15 pay grade. And EPA has an Office of Inspector General (OIG) that does the same job so why are we paying a GS-15 (\$160K) and three GS-14s (\$145K each) to do a job we already have covered with the IG? That is a huge waste of precious resources. Move the PIQA SAC to the field along with the agents so they can investigate environmental crimes or put them on Administrator's Pruitt's protective detail that is in dire need of staffing. We don't have to hire, just rearrange what we have.

-See suggestions made under Q1.

Move the CID agents into to "domicile" status at their homes and shut down the expensive office space we lease. The agents can take a tax break for a home office and EPA can cut millions in lease dollars spent. CID has been made to downsize the vehicles and in most areas that need 4x4 vehicles, can't get them. Law enforcement can not be accomplished in an electric Smart car. A slightly better vehicle could be achieved with home offices.

-Align with CDC/dept. of health/local extension offices/Dept. of Housing and Urban Development on bed bug issues?

- Ability to make scanned PDF documents searchable and ability to extract information from PDF files (use of Optical Character Recognition software, Adobe Pro).
- Voice messages going directly to email as voicemail and text.
- Use electronic notebook (a

1089 5/19/2017

1090 5/19/2017

EPA's IT infrastructure is so old that tasks take much longer than they should. I believe that OEI's position of decentralized management is both more expensive than a centralized IT operation, and inefficient as a management procedure. Decentralization is inefficient and lazy.

The OCFO systems governance process is a significant roadblock in the ability to work efficiently and address issues timely. The process has too many layers (ex. FRB, Stakeholder meetings, rankings, etc.) that impede the progress of getting work completed. In the past we were able to work directly with staff to address OCFO system issues generally within a few days and the overly bureaucratic process in place now can take a month for one of the groups to review and discuss an issue. The process needs to be addressed and only items that are of significant cost or time to address should be put through the governance process and operational issues that can be resolved with FTE in place should be moved forward immediately.

Centralize all IT operations.

Provide an infrastructure powerful enough to support putting all services in the cloud, and before OEI disagrees arbitrarily, wall Ethernet ports are still CAT-5. CAT-5 was really good...in the 1990's.

EPA should stop all funding to in-house software, and move to SaaS for everything.

SaaS, modernized infrastructure that can support the move to cloud (it doesn't yet), find a solution that can replace the antiquated idea that network drives are a good idea - perhaps a DM system.

Partner with other agencies for a service desk that isn't terrible. EZTech is the absolute worst helpdesk on earth. Clearly their only metric is how many tickets they close, and how fast. Service is secondary or tertiary to actually solving problems. Basic IT language is beyond their comprehension.

Efficiencies could be gained by consolidating administrative functions across the agency. For example, OCFO and OARM could be consolidated into one organization and would serve as the administrative arm of the agency. There are several functions that overlap between the two regarding financial controls, contracts, human resources, etc. In addition, all IT functions could be consolidated within OEI. For example, OARM has Information Resources Management Divisions (IRMD) in RTP, Cincinnati and HQ that perform IT functions that are already provided by OEI. Also, OCFO maintains an IT systems staff that manages financial systems that could easily be done by OEI and would fall more in line with the mission of their organization. The OCFO IT systems staff are performing functions that are being done by OEI and result in a duplication of efforts (ex. hosting, storage, contract management, etc.).

A higher bandwidth network that doesn't get overburdened in the afternoon is a start. Poorly constructed in-house software is the next thing to be replaced. The only reason people like the software that's been created in-house is that they've only known the terrible software developed in-house. Stop being afraid to spend money on replacing the awful infrastructure and software currently in place.

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There are plenty of opportunities to reduce inefficiencies at EPA. Some of them would include automatic timing to shut off non-essential lights at the end of each workday and over weekends. Many lights stay on overnight and likely add up to significant costs over a typical year. There can also be significant workspace reduction done, especially at headquarters. This could include desk sharing (especially relevant for those who telework 2-3 days each week), reduced workspace areas allocated per individual, more open workspace designs, etc. For a range of options developed by GSA see https://www.gsa.gov/graphics/pbs/Innovative_Workplaces-508_R2OD26_0Z5RDZ-i34K-pR.pdf

I am sending this message in full seriousness. Can we please equip the garbage cans (those pushed around by cleaning staff) with soft, air-filled rubber wheels that don't pollute the hallways and offices with extremely loud rattling? This often results in moments in meetings where a speaker cannot be heard, and those calling-in lose touch from the meeting. I'm sure there are many others that would support this change to alleviate this daily annoyance.

1. The way PeoplePlus is used currently requires a lot of unnecessary re-work. We have to submit our time early, typically 2-3 days before the end of the pay period, requiring us to forecast our hours for the next 2-3 days. If we end up sick in that time frame or decide to take annual leave, the timesheet will have to be revised the following week, which requires the employee and timekeeper to interact with PeoplePlus again. In the private sector you do not submit your hours worked until after you have actually worked them! Why are we doing this? This shouldn't be allowed!

2. ORD uses matrix management which includes multiple layers of management intersecting at various levels making it very confusing. The private sector tried matrix management years ago and abandoned it. Yet ORD adopted it 5 years ago or so. Ask any one rank and file employee how it works and no one will be able to describe it. Please get rid of this management approach adopt a simpler management framework. New jobs for managers seem to be created frequently while little at the rank and file level.

More cooperation and sharing of resources is needed for the ORD laboratories. Each one has unique capabilities which should be made available across the labs. To do this they all need a common framework to allow for "customers" (scientists across ORD) to access these capabilities. For example, one lab may have capabilities to analyze for stable isotopes that others don't have. This lab should behave like a commercial lab for others across ORD. Very little of this is being done.

We tend to lag in technology and supporting software. We are still using Windows 7 and IE11. IE11 has a hard time opening documents on line. As such many of us switched to Google, which will now be rolled out to all us. Thanks! Video conferencing with the Tandberg system usually has technical difficulties with poor video and most always poor audio. I don't know if it's due to the users or the system itself but it needs to be addressed

Management in more progressive and successful organizations understand that failure is acceptable at a certain level, along with the successes. ORD management does not understand this. ORD management seems to operate out of fear and protection of their jobs. Our management seems more focused on good PR than good science. Science involves risk taking! Let ORD do this!!

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1095 5/19/2017

To many layers of management. Three, four and more at times to get something approved or to do your job. Need to streamline and get to a better manager / employee ratio.

Process Improvement - Any suggestion, recommendation, or improvements have to go through a formal process that is very limiting and the process is streamlined or changed so that it isn't the originators request but that of a managers.

To much customization and redundancy between and within the Regions, Offices, and labs because of lack of Agency wide centralization of things like Travel, HR, Training, Delegations, Record Management practices.

Get private sector more involved.

When EPA gets rid of old computers and printers we currently send them to an electronics recycler. However, this equipment very often still works and should be either sold to the public or sent to Environmental Agencies in other countries. In Region 5, Chicago back in the early 1990s we used to ship our old computers to the environmental agency in Lithuania. ISB says that its hard to wipe hard drives clean and reinstall software, but there has to be a way to do this efficiently so that working computers are sold or reused instead of being scrapped.

Modernize the way we do business. It takes EPA way to long to get up to speed technologically. By the time we improve a process it is outdated.

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Better, faster, more efficient use of O365, SharePoint, and other IT tools.

People that want to change career fields are limited and not allowed because it isn't what management wants them to do. Management has no Work Force analysis and focus on what we need for the future and not plan to move people from old jobs to new jobs / careers that are need.

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O365 / SharePoint - Start using what we pay for and stop wasting money.

Centralize things that we do the same (travel, training, HR, ...) Make it easier to move between Departments / Agencies to meet the change in work from one Department to another. If one Departments work picks up and one goes down it should be easy to shift people from one to the other without having to hire more people.

The agency should undertake a systematic analysis of all of its business processes with the goal of streamlining them by converting them to all electronic processes. Right now there seems to be only ad hoc efforts going on in various offices, with little or no coordination. Which processes should be prioritized (reduction of paper, impact on regulated community, need to share, long-term or permanent records, high profile, etc.)? Then representatives of every impacted EPA office should participate, not just HQ, because every perspective is important in devising processes and systems that work for everyone, and if the process has an external component, outside constituents should also be involved. EPA should institute a business process improvement office and hire staff who actually have done the work successfully in the past. If contractors are used, the contract should be very carefully written with oversight by EPA staff who have actually done the work, so that more taxpayer money is not wasted.

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There are many "community based programs" created under the last administration. It is unclear where they are going so that is creating confusion and wasted time. Some programs are changing their names to rebrand the same work. Decisions need to be made as to whether these programs will continue as there are FTE, grants and contracts tied to the work. Examples include - making a visible difference communities, CREAT, Strong Cities/Strong Communities program, "livability" programs, "sustainability" programs, etc.

Political appointees ignoring peer reviewed science is HORRIFIC. I would fire them and replace them with someone who cares about the environment and human health and not stuffing their own pockets with money.

More funds dedicated for collaboration on children's environmental health issues. NOT removing the clean power plan.
Aggressive climate change policies. no DENIAL of science.

Fully staffed EPA, with at 16,000 employees. Cutting FTE will only reduce EPA's ability to reach our constituents

The Water Infrastructure and Resiliency Finance Center is an unnecessary overlay of work already being performed by States and other parts of EPA. It is unnecessary spending on FTE, grants, contracts and travel.

<https://www.epa.gov/waterfinancecenter>

The Finance center was created under the previous Administration as part of the Build American Initiative. Staff was reorganized to do this taking away FTE from core mission. The work they do is duplicative of state and core EPA program work creating confusion and duplication of efforts. This includes:

Environmental Finance Centers - give grant \$ to set up 10 centers across the country. These groups have limited expertise and are an overlay of the state role - Over \$1M in grants Fy16

WaterCARE communities - providing contractors to work with 10 communities creating an overlay of state role and putting EPA in an inappropriate role with communities - over \$500k in contract \$ FY16

Water Finance Clearing House - spending time and \$ on what is essentially Wikipedia for financing infrastructure. This is unnecessary - why is EPA going this?

Webinars/Outreach/Education - they are putting together this info which is what other core program offices can and are already doing creating an unnecessary overlay.

When it comes to financing water infrastructure, states have forums in place to work with communities in their states. There are already many national forums to then share that information. All this work is duplicative of that.

FIRE POLITICAL APPOINTEES that clearly do not care about human health and the environment.

When an EPA employee has to travel, let them use the internet to buy a ticket. It is much cheaper to have a change fee than a fully refundable ticket.

When it comes to finding water infrastructure, the requirements are different than other federal agencies creating additional red tape and slowing down projects. For ex. EPA funds for water infrastructure and then DOT funds for the roads and sidewalks. Often times communities use multiple funding sources to do construction. There are too many and too many different requirements which causes delays. Why can't there be better alignment of federal infrastructure funding?

FOCUS ON CLIMATE CHANGE.

Use peer reviewed science to make policy decisions.

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Roles and expectations for various parties within each program are not appropriately defined and focused on the work at hand. Non-technical managers trying to manage workload and highly technical staff blunder about and actually hinder the progress of work to be done. Another example involves legal counsel not merely providing counsel on their review of technical deliverables, but instead, staff lawyers spend way too much time rewriting each aspect of a technical letter (not legal documents) so that the technical points are lost in communication and the deliverable is seriously behind schedule.

(a) EPA has created Confidential Business Information (CBI) regulations and internal policies which greatly exceed the statutory protections Congress provided in the Trade Secrets Act and prevent efficient sharing of investigative information with federal law enforcement colleagues. EPA's CBI regulations should be revised to allow for information-sharing with other federal and state law enforcement organizations, so long as appropriate practices are in place to ensure confidentiality.

(b) EPA does not efficiently and effectively perform mission support functions such as the provision of IT tools and services, contracting, and personnel actions (across the board, from hiring to discipline/firing). I have two general suggestions to address these problems. First, the relevant offices should be adequately staffed and structured so that they can perform their required functions. (More front-line staff and fewer layers of management and bureaucracy between program office users and mission support might be advisable.) Second, support offices should internally publish for their user communities (i) their goals concerning the speed with which they generally commit to carry out each action within their core support functions ??? for example, a new hire in a competitive job series or a standard contracting request for proposals ??? and (ii) a web-based real-time ???scorecard??? of actions in progress allowing users to see the status of their mission support requests, how long those matters have been pending at each relevant stage of the overall action, and how that compares with promised response rates.

Nationally, we want to provide expertise for our state partners, while assisting them in conducting their work! Partnerships are so important in terms of value added and that is the key for shared goals between partners. Companies want a level playing field and consistency across state boundaries, and that can be achieved when EPA offers and States/Tribes/Local communities accept the assistance of EPA with our partnership in mind (on both sides, we must identify and acknowledge common ground - and win/win scenarios).

Our partnerships with states include the delegation of authority to conduct a great deal of the nation's pollution control work, along with continued federal oversight and enforcement to ensure that national environmental standards established by Congress and implementing EPA regulations are not diluted or disregarded.

Each year for the past decade, EPA's Inspector General has included among the major management challenges facing EPA the "Need to Improve Oversight of States, Territories, and Tribes Authorized to Accomplish Environmental Goals." In my view, EPA often falls short in this regard because it is unwilling to communicate frankly and publically about the challenges that states face. I would address this problem by finding new ways to communicate publically about issues that EPA, the states, and the public should all agree are critical to successful environmental protection work.

For example, when I worked in EPA Region 3 I learned that although the Virginia DEQ was authorized to implement RCRA, the state had not a single employee who could collect a sample of suspected hazardous waste (an activity that requires both technical and OSHA-related training). State inspectors confronting potential/suspected hazardous waste therefore had two options: either ask the (potentially) regulated industry actor to collect samples, perform analysis, and submit the results to the state; or hire a contractor to perform those tasks on the state's behalf. The first option disappeared if a suspected violator refused to cooperate; the second demanded financial resources which were seldom available (and in any event precluded timely sampling, allowing uncooperative violators to spirit away the suspect material and deny liability.) I informed my Regional RCRA program colleagues, assuming that they would be surprised and share my concern that a state deemed qualified to regulate hazardous waste "from cradle to grave," per RCRA's requirements, was incapable of even determining whether an unknown material was indeed a hazardous waste to begin with. It turned out my colleagues were well aware of the issue, however; they saw it simply as a reality of . . . the states' resource constraints. For all I know, the situation persists in Virginia to this day. I have often wondered how many other RCRA-authorized states lack any effective ability to collect and analyze samples of suspected hazardous waste. It is the type of question regarding state environmental protection capabilities that EPA has traditionally been unwilling to confront and communicate about, and a change is sorely needed.

Workshare agreements have worked in the past to help communicate roles, expectations, and objectives for each party. It seems these instruments are no longer used in some programs and communications have stalled at higher levels of management.

My first idea is to reverse the order of that list of stakeholders: per our statutory directives from Congress, EPA is charged with protecting human health and the environment; ???the public at large?? should therefore be the primary beneficiary of EPA??s work, rather than the last in line.

Second, I would recognize the limited applicability of the concept of ???customer service?? a private sector/commercial concept ??? to improving the effectiveness of a federal executive branch agency charged by Congress with establishing and ensuring compliance with pollution control requirements.

That said, each of those referenced constituencies is critically important to EPA??s work. My overall suggestion is that EPA continually strive to improve its standard-setting and compliance/enforcement work, aiming for thoroughness, expeditious action, and consistency with the core values that have served as agency guideposts since Administrator Ruckelshaus led the agency during the Nixon Administration: science, transparency, and rule of law.

The Agency would do a state no favors, for example, by approving a request for delegated Clean Water Act authority despite the state??s inability or unwillingness to meet EPA??s regulatory state program requirements. Program approval in such circumstances would (1) disregard the law, in contradiction of EPA??s core values and the current Administrator??s repeated public statements regarding our commitment to the rule of law; (2) constitute final agency action that would generate uncertainty due to its vulnerability to successful legal challenge; and (3) deprive each of the above-referenced constituencies of the benefits of a well-functioning pollution control program -- which not only protects human health and the environment, but also establishes a level economic playing field across the country. (Responsible members of the regulated community who are good corporate citizens and commit to meeting their legal obligations should not labor at a competitive disadvantage compared to those operating in a state whose environmental protections fall short of federal standards.)

Yes - but each program office should explore options from the ground up to best identify current changes you ask about.

Yes ??? see response to following question.

Yes - we live in a computer age and yet EPA is behind everyone in terms of electronic structure to replace traditional paper filing. Tools we have just been given recently are limited in options for use and in fact already outdated by the time staff learn how to use them. Updates to regulations for e-reporting were on the verge of improving things, but have been on hold since December due to the change in administration.

Yes. On the technology front, accelerating the move to electronic reporting by regulated entities will save the regulated community money and allow EPA to more quickly and thoroughly evaluate self-reported pollution data.

On the process front, as the recent OIG report on 2017 EPA Management Challenges observed (as it has every year for the past decade or more), the EPA needs to improve its workload analysis to accomplish its mission efficiently and effectively. In addition to conducting workload analysis that would allow more strategic decision making about the allocation of scarce resources, EPA could also be more accountable to the public and to our state partners if we did a better job of being transparent about the resources that we devote to different types of environmental protection activities.

Consider the Stratospheric Ozone Protection provisions of the Clean Air Act, which were passed in the 1990 Amendments and signed into law by the first President Bush. They control emissions of industrial gases primarily refrigerants which degrade the stratospheric ozone layer, creating an ozone hole which exposes the earth and its inhabitants to excess ultraviolet radiation. The phase-outs of polluting gases required by the law, along with the continuing (legal) use of those same refrigerants in parts of the developing world, creates the potential for a lucrative black market in smuggled refrigerants. And apart from the phase-out and potential smuggling, these provisions also impose emission control requirements governing refrigerants that continue to be legally used within the U.S.

Congress did not provide for delegation of authority to enforce these provisions to the states, so EPA shoulders sole responsibility for policing the potential multi-billion-dollar black market as well as for enforcing more conventional emission control violations involving legal refrigerants. EPA dedicates just two of its 15,000 employees to enforce these provisions, located in a Center of Excellence in Region 5. (The criminal enforcement program also periodically dedicates resources to investigating cases of smuggling, intentional emissions, or the illegal use of unapproved refrigerants which in some cases has led to severe injury or death.) I do not pretend to know what a workload analysis would yield regarding a reasonable investment of resources to enforce these CAA provisions, but I am confident the figure would be greater than 2 FTE. Similar stories could be told about a number of other pollution control programs.

Believe we already do this to a great extent with our states, so not sure here about realigning.

As referenced in the answer to question 2, I would suggest that EPA attempt to accomplish more where we share responsibilities with states by increasing frank and public communication about the challenges that states face. For example, every state has at least one delegated or authorized federal pollution control program and therefore faces the need to address intentional (i.e. criminal) violations of those laws. But although every state has environmental regulators, relatively few have environmental crime fighters.

In fact, most states dedicate not a single employee to the investigation or prosecution of pollution control crimes. (To my knowledge, twenty-nine states are in this category.) Another fourteen might be called "one-hand states" because the number of pollution control investigators and prosecutors they employ combined can be counted on one hand. Only seven states employ more than five dedicated pollution crime fighters (New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Louisiana, Texas, and California); and in many cases, even these states' environmental prosecutions predominantly concern solid waste dumping of used tires, construction and demolition debris, or other trash, rather than the types of pollution addressed in federal environmental laws.

As a result, EPA's criminal program which is currently staffed at the lowest level in over two decades is frequently the only resource available to deal with the specialized investigative and evidentiary demands of environmental criminal conduct. Due to its historically small size, EPA criminal enforcement personnel have always sought to "force multiply" by partnering with other federal and state law enforcement partners. But ever-shrinking numbers of EPA CID agents inescapably decreases our ability to pursue these tactics and other attempts to maximize the amount of environmental protection work we can accomplish with our limited resources.

Over the long term, could we work with state partners, encourage them to dedicate additional resources to criminal enforcement, and to ultimately bring significant criminal cases? Certainly through a combination of information-gathering, public communication regarding state capacity and prosecutorial results, and increased federal resources to train and otherwise build state capacity. But without continuing attention and resources, state programs which will inevitably be small in most jurisdictions -- will again eventually atrophy, as we have observed in a number of jurisdictions over the past decade. A more immediate, and more realistic option to accomplish more by way of

Yes. Our organization has a centralized case management system that allows investigators and attorneys to create and house work product and other documents in a location that satisfies federal recordkeeping requirements, organizes material for subsequent use in prosecution, allows field managers to review and approve documents and actions, and allows headquarters management to monitor and evaluate individual cases and the overall docket. EPA has never created a similar system for the (much larger amount of) civil enforcement work conducted by OECA personnel in the Regions and at Headquarters. Though this would require an up-front investment of resources, I think that it would ultimately generate significant increases in efficiency and program management/ accountability.

1101

5/19/2017

Management directives that would require the agency to change its position on a particular point of law should be vetted thoroughly with EPA's Office of General Counsel, OECA and our partners at Department of Justice to avoid unnecessary disruption in ongoing enforcement actions and litigation. Proposed changes in policy going forward (what the law or regulations should be) should be clearly distinguished from the current state of law that we must currently enforce (what the law is).

EPA should support delegated state environmental programs to the maximum extent it can, while also recognizing EPA's important role in ensuring that a national baseline of environmental and human health protection as envisioned in our federal environmental law framework is achieved. When state programs struggle from limited financial, technical or legal capabilities, EPA must serve as a backstop to ensure adequate and appropriate responses to environmental disasters and instances of non-compliance. For example, many states do not have sufficient resources or legal authority to adequately investigate and prosecute the most egregious, criminal violations of our environmental laws. EPA's Office of Criminal Enforcement, Forensics and Training, along with their partners at the Department of Justice and U.S. Attorney offices, must have sufficient resources to ensure that intentional violations of federal (and delegated state) environmental laws are detected and properly addressed.

The agency's website should continue to be a clear and transparent way for the public to understand the scientific and legal basis for the wide variety of environmental topics that EPA administers.

EPA has been operating on a very lean budget with no significant increases for nearly a decade. While some additional opportunities for increased efficiencies may be identified, it is difficult to see how we can cut much more and still maintain environmental protection for all Americans.

One technology issue that could make a big difference in day-to-day productivity is providing EPA employees with the ability to securely access their government e-mail accounts from a personally owned smartphone device. Currently, access to e-mail is only available from a government owned laptop or smartphone, or a personally owned PC. Very few EPA employees are provided with government owned smartphones. EPA employees in the field without a government owned smartphone are often in places where it is inconvenient or impossible to use a laptop or PC. It seems that other federal agencies have found ways to allow secure access to government e-mail accounts by use of personal smartphones. This should be a priority issue for EPA's Office of Environmental Information to resolve to make all EPA employees more productive.

The LEAN program has been a very useful in streamlining agency processes, particularly in laboratory organizations.

1102 5/19/2017

1103 5/19/2017

First of all, I would like to say thank you for this opportunity. While many people may not respond to this for fear of it not being anonymous (and anyways ??? depending on responses ??? writing style and context provided in answers can often identify someone even if anonymous was the sincere intent) and many people may choose this as a forum to vent all sorts of gripes ??? I am choosing to take your actions simply at face value. I am glad that you are seeking feedback from all employees ??? because our management culture I think often will just choose to tell you what they think you want to here and also quite frankly is not often in touch with issues in their own organizations. I cannot remember the last time EPA did 360 feedback on managers or whether it ever has.

I have worked at EPA for a little over 10 years and have an MBA from a top school. I have also worked in a variety of positions in the non-profit and private sectors. I have worked all sides of the fence basically in the environmental world. I do not believe that corporations are evil (last time I checked, I bought their products too) ??? I do believe that there are always bad players among us in all sectors.

In terms of administrative requirements, management procedures, or other organizational processes that prevent you from doing your job efficiently and effectively or that are no longer necessary ??? the question would be where to begin. I think the Feds are probably the most over-regulated sector in the U.S???.not industry. And it just gets worse and worse every year. Because ??? as you know ??? if one group or person messes up, the fix is ???more training??Â and/or ???more paperwork??Â I can???t name any one thing in particular ??? and many things are not fixable by EPA. It???s just every year there are more and more forms to complete, they change the process on you (oh and you didn???t read the 10 conflicting emails about that), they change the form on you, you spend an hour looking for the form because you can???t find anything on the EPA intranet, etc. Not all of these forms are EPA things, though. Just for a lot of things that you are ???supposed??Â to do administratively, you can???t get clear answers on what to do. And then you???re either trying to track down who has the answer or searching the internet or intranet for it.

Centralization of certain functions both outside of a Region (or within a Region, but outside of a Division) have removed people with first hand knowledge of personnel needs (such as hiring or travel) to a distant employee who may not answer telephone or email. While in most instances such organization works fine, in certain instances, it removes accountability to the requestor. It wastes productive time as there is a greater need (and more steps) to find out the status of a request.

Well, I think first we need to decide what results we want to see. Or maybe really what results we want to focus on. I know that regulations govern to some degree our priorities and resources limit our abilities to achieve everything we might like to achieve in a finite timeframe. But surely, e.g., we can find 1-2 things every year beyond the routine must do's that we can all agree to focus on to drive to a higher level of results.

I can't speak to all state government cultures, but in my own office we seem to lack ability to focus. If you try to achieve 10 major efforts all at once with a staff of 2 and next to no funds, you are likely bound to fail. I think we have a real internal management problem where to do lists are developed but then thrown to the wind / forgotten. Or - EPA may write strategies that define broad goals but those really don't mean much.

But it's lack of management focus, lack of management holding staff accountable, etc. In fairness, we are all constantly now distracted by a ridiculous parade of fire drills and just operational challenges that seem to get worse every year. The priorities are changed on us too (and I'm sure our state and local partners) by politics or other factors. Also, we have staff issues you can hold a staff member accountable all you want but if they don't have the skill set to do the work, you will have little success. Yet, staff are pushed to finish things and the result is garbage because they didn't have the skill set to do the job properly. Sadly, I think half the time management can't tell the difference.

So, unfortunately, I don't have any brilliant ideas for you here.

States, tribes, and local communities already provide assistance to EPA, but will not be able to assist in achieving better environmental results until they have more resources. In programs I am familiar with, the private sector actively works to problem solve and find cheaper and equally appropriate outcomes. Relationships with most are fine; for those who do not care about the environment, closer coordination will not result in a better environmental result.

While I think individual pockets can be helpful in their own right, you can't improve customer service across the board and you certainly can't build off that or track your results without a system. The Agency recently bought Salesforce the number one CRM platform. I don't know what better platform to deliver customer service across the board from. I have implemented in my own program and had amazing results. An internal enterprise Salesforce system would also help with my comments under Item 1 with getting better answers to internal questions.

However, too, see comment 4. I think before we go charging into serving we may first need to fix out processes through efforts such as LEAN.

More employees to interact with these communities. Employees are addressing statutory requirements and are stretched thin.

I think greater implementation of LEAN throughout the Agency would be great. However, see my comments under #2 ??? you don't want someone LEANing a process who can't think a process through. Unfortunately, I think we have way too many staff who just know how to push paper rather than want to or care to ask if they can't do something better. I am not necessarily implying that they are not intelligent ??? I am saying you get what you pay for. And I don't necessarily fault someone for just wanting to come to work, do what they're told and go home. Heck ??? on my own accord I worked uncompensated overtime for 3 years to LEAN my program ??? while management appreciates the results, it didn't result in a promotion, and now the perception is that I don't have enough work to do. So, there's no reward in making improvements ??? quite frankly, there's often a disincentive because most of us would have to work double time to make the improvements while still doing our job at the same time.

So, yes, opportunities abound for LEAN and I think hand in hand with that are opportunities for electronic processes. Money and staff do not abound.

However, at least at the time I do think that we do have enough staff overall ??? just not all of those staff are utilized effectively. Not all of those staff have the skill sets to do their job (and certainly you can't turn a BA in history into a chemist). And, at least in my group, this is not a "cool" initiative that anyone seems to want to work on. That is, staff planning and the like. In terms of staff training, we have no funds to re-train staff. We get like \$1000 a year per staff for training ??? that's insane. I believe I have seen many EPA HR papers written saying that they will work on things like this ??? at least where I am, if these things are being worked on, I am not seeing it.

Beyond "cool" things we could do like LEAN, I just think a lot of our time is wasted on our own internal lack of customer service and general lack of management processes. SharePoint was supposed to magically fix all this, but has obviously become what we all knew it would become ??? just another share drive wasteland with a pretty face (note: it will take about 5 years for anyone in management to admit this....but again, maybe they really just don't know any better). We can't keep doing business by emailing around spreadsheets that we all need to complete yesterday. We can't keep sharing important how to's via email. What's worse, we complete all these spreadsheets and then actions are not taken on them. It's pure insanity. If we are talking about financial information ??? then we Personally, I think there are too many people in HQ who do not deal directly with constituencies. In most instances, direct interaction with other levels of governments, the regulated community and other stake holders occur at the Region. However, I will admit that I may not understand what the needs are that resulted in creation of their jobs.

I think we are already pursuing a lot of them ??? shared services, LEAN, etc. We just need to do more. I am heartened by the recent acquisition of several cloud service providers, which could hugely benefit our work internally and with our partners. EPA unfortunately has a tendency of poor IT implementations for those services that are inwardly focused (reiterating comment above ??? people are put in charge without the proper skill set; management doesn't know the difference). Inwardly focused IT implementations would do much better if they sought feedback from / involved in their development actual EPA users.

See answer to 7 below.

I'm not actually sure if we have any one group just focused on service across the board with our partners / potential partners. We I think ping them all separately i.e., we have OW, OAR, etc. all working separately with the state of X but no one group maybe trying to work with the state of X at a high level to identify concerns / cross-cutting issues, etc. I think maybe ECOS kind of serves in this capacity I guess for the states. But I still wonder if something more might be helpful. It would be a near impossible job to accomplish, though, unless say we were tracking at least at some high level in a customer relationship management system our work with the states.

I am not aware of any.

Salesforce. We need a wider implementation of Salesforce like that pursued at USDA and FDA.

There should be a focus on records retention and records management. Many other agencies are far in advance of EPA on this and electronic collection of documents for FOIAs and litigation.

1104 5/19/2017

1105 5/19/2017

We need more peer reviewed studies to identify potential advancements that are based in science. In addition, I think that program evaluations to identify what is working and what is not would be beneficial to the organization.

Finally, we should use evidence in budget decisions.

In the Contractor Laboratory Program (CLP), matrix spike (MS) and matrix spike duplicates (MSD) are performed per sample delivery group, on PCB and pesticides organic laboratory analysis. This is very costly, and MS/MSD quality control is not cost effective. MS/MSD has been eliminated on all other organic analysis but PCB and pesticides, and should be eliminated for PCB and pesticides.

Field duplicates analysis for CLP organic and inorganic analysis should be eliminated. Field duplicate samples are a GREAT expense, and little benefit since the data is not qualified due to Field duplicate analysis.

1106 5/19/2017

1107 5/19/2017

There is way too much mandatory annual administrative training. Such training should be required once for new employees, with refreshers at five- or ten-year intervals only.

Accreditation procedures should apply only to regulatory activities, not to screening-level projects.

We should be able to provide reasonable technical assistance to all governments who request it, regardless of the level of advocacy from EPA program offices. Our travel budget should be increased to enable this assistance.

Increase our travel budget so that we can spend more time on the ground out among our stakeholders.

In the Contractor Laboratory Program (CLP), matrix spike (MS) and matrix spike duplicates (MSD) are performed per sample delivery group, on PCB and pesticides organic laboratory analysis. This is very costly, and MS/MSD quality control is not cost effective. MS/MSD has been eliminated on all other organic analysis but PCB and pesticides, and should be eliminated for PCB and pesticides.

Field duplicates analysis for CLP organic and inorganic analysis should be eliminated. Field duplicate samples are a GREAT expense, and little benefit since the data is not qualified due to Field duplicate analysis.

Prohibit contractual components in state grant programs.

We need to continue to push the envelope on remote sensing, real-time data acquisition, and GIS modeling to better target our efforts at environmental compliance assistance.

We should increase our emphasis on technical assistance to geographic programs such as the National Estuary Program.

Real-time water quality data acquisition and web-based serving of this data to the public on a geographic basis.

1108 5/19/2017

1109 5/19/2017

I object to requirements that we as EPA staff must get approval from headquarters before making public statements. Such requirements are burdensome and unnecessary and undermine the Agency's commitment to transparency. EPA has always prioritized communication with stakeholders -- members of the public, members of the regulated community, state & local governments. Requiring HQ clearance for too many categories of communications will censor the Agency and interfere with the public's understanding of what we do.

We need to maintain funding for EPA programs that support development of legal infrastructure at the state and tribal levels, so that those entities can effectively enforce and implement the federal environmental laws entrusted to them. EPA must be able to maintain its oversight of programs delegated to the states, so that the private sector is certain of national consistency.

EPA needs to improve its transparency and communication with stakeholders and the wider public, so everyone better understands what EPA is doing, the bases for EPA action (peer-reviewed science and the rule of law), and the implications of those actions. In particular, EPA should do a better job of communicating the economic and public health benefits of our regulations, which have been proven by peer-reviewed studies.

Strengthening EPA's enforcement work would increase compliance and therefore reduce costs, to the Agency, the private sector, and the public: non-compliance by industry leads to increased costs responding to accident and releases.

The Administration should consider revising Executive Order 12372--Intergovernmental review of Federal programs and OMB's Common Rule implementing the Order to foster a more cost-effective means of providing elected state and local officials with opportunities to consult with EPA and other agencies on Federal financial assistance programs. EPA's regulations adopting the common rule are at 40 CFR Part 29. The burdens imposed on the public by these regulations could be substantially reduced by eliminating unnecessary requirements and authorizing the use of modern technology.

One of the key components of the intergovernmental review process envisioned by the Order is State Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) who would coordinate the consultation process. However, due to budget constraints only half of the states maintain SPOCs, and EPA must make other arrangements to consult with directly affected state and local officials. These other arrangements typically require that grant applicants contact the state and local officials. This process is confusing and burdensome for applicants as well as the state and local officials who are expected to review detailed grant applications for projects that have minimal effect on their jurisdiction due to the absence of a dollar threshold for the review process. Further, the Order and OMB's Common rule were issued in the 1980s well before the advent of the internet and other means of efficient collaboration between governmental partners.

Please note that I do not question the value of obtaining the views of our state and local partners before EPA makes substantial financial assistance awards. It's just that there is a better way of taking care of the public's business. This is a well-intentioned (albeit outdated) Order, and the Office of Grants and Debarment has been looking for efficiencies for this process, however the constraints of the Order and accompanying regulations preclude this from being easily fixed, as they did not anticipate the advent of the internet.

EPA is often overwhelmed by document reviews necessitated by FOIA requests and discovery processes in litigation. If our IT resources and records management practices were updated to be more effective and efficient, we would be in a much better position to respond quickly and with a minimum of Agency resource.

We should consider implementing terms and conditions more consistently across the Federal government. For example, indirect costs (IDCs) may be handled differently by each Federal agency, and it is enough of a difficult topic that it could be difficult for recipients to comply with managing their IDCs one way.

I am not personally aware of best practices but feel certain that we could learn a great deal from the records and data management practices of large law firms and major corporations.

It would greatly help if we could hold people more accountable for their work, and/or more easily fire staff for non-performance. There do not currently seem to be repercussions for staff members who do not perform well (or at all) and there is too much work to be done to allow anyone to choose not to perform.

1110

5/19/2017

OECA's No Action Assurance policy makes property transactions, specifically the reuse on partially contaminated properties (Brownfields, and former Superfund) much more difficult than it should be. The No Action Assurance Policy says that, outside of a formal settlement agreement, EPA will never tell a party purchasing a potentially contaminated site that the Agency won't pursue them for additional cleanup even if the party has taken all reasonable steps to assure that contamination won't be spread. This prohibition against providing assurance to a party in a simple comfort letter holds true even if the EPA has determined that it doesn't a case to pursue against the party.

Revise the No Action Assurance policy to state that parties that jump through the bona fide prospective purchaser (BFPP) hoops will be given a letter that says, unequivocally, is not a liable party. Make this apply to lessees as well. BFPP hoops could be streamlined as well: e.g. EPA regs require a BFPP to hire an environmental professional to evaluate sites, even if the EPA has already evaluated the site and documented site conditions extensively. Sincerely [REDACTED B6] contact me if you want more info on this.

1111

5/22/2017

PARS, the annual performance review system, is not necessary because it appears to be valueless. When a supervisor makes statements to his staff member such as "You have to walk on water to get an Outstanding" or "I gave you the same evaluation I received", that is indicative that PARS is a useless requirement. Also, preparation of a Weekly Report for management is a very reasonable requirement - - - if management actually reads the report. If a Weekly Report is required because that's the way it's always been, then that would not be an optimum use of a staff member's time.

Partnering - a relationship in which there is mutual respect - must first start within EPA. Being a supervisor should not be a license to speak to staff disrespectfully. It is never appropriate to publicly embarrass an employee. Should there be mandatory refresher training for managers?

PARS is an annual and arbitrary event. If it could be replaced with the previous performance review system, which was simpler and worked, morale and productivity might increase. Also, there is a required template for five-year reviews for Superfund sites, so why does each and every draft five-year review need to be sent to HQ for review? Let's think about streamlining the five-year review process.

PARS involves 2 meetings/year between an employee and his or her supervisor and the generation of a significant amount of paper. Unfortunately, it does not appear to yield any value whatsoever to the taxpayer. Does EPA need to spend the man-hours and paper to memorialize favoritism? The previous performance review system was much better. Also, the procedure for initiating an Interagency Agreement (IA) with another fed agency appears to be very time-consuming and steeped in "CYA". Doesn't it make sense for federal agencies to work together? Initiating an IA should be easy, not excessive. Let's spend time on getting valuable work done. Taxpayers want results, not bureaucracy.

What about an anonymous electronic suggestion box that is always available? This current survey is great, but it seems like a rare event. An always-available suggestion box could increase accountability.

Not sure.

Just brainstorming, if managers needed to attend mandatory refresher training, and if they had a trainer speak to them in a disrespectful and hurtful way, instead of in a professional manner, then maybe the manager would see how it is when they act that way. If managers could be reminded to speak in a tactful way, then there might be fewer complaints from employees.

1112

5/22/2017

EPA uses outdated software that is not user friendly. Instead of using maxiflex and peopleplus, employees should track their time in one system. The Concur software is overly complex and inefficient.

Also, I spend so much of my day drafting briefings to the political appointees in Washington that it is difficult to complete substantive work. The new administration should delegate so as not to inhibit the process of regional work.

The one factor that I see limiting my ability to service tribes, local communities, the regulated community, and the public is lack of adequate funding. Personally, I am not authorized to attend meetings with regulated entities on enforcement activities and compliance assistance matters because the Region does not have sufficient funding. Similarly, work slows because Agency employees are assigned to too many matters. The Agency, the environment, and the public would benefit from additional qualified, hard-working employees.

Increase salaries to attract better talent. The Agency should be hiring only the best scientific and legal talent. Promotions should be merit-based and the Agency should use its authority to terminate people that do not perform their job efficiently and effectively. Employees should not be allowed to take undue advantage of Flexiplace. The Agency should somehow limit Flexiplace so as to allow episodic Flexiplace only or to cap the number of hours that an employee can work remotely per day.

The Region 2 travel help desk (increases work for those who know how to do TAs, process is slow, and often TAs are incorrect) was put in place because managers want to rubber stamp Travel Authorizations instead of being accountable for reviewing them. The service should be optional and not required.

If Managers are responsible for certifying hours in People Plus, then what is the need for timekeepers? Timekeepers often send needless (sometimes 7 in a week) reminders to staff to do People Plus. People who forget to certify their hours on time should just be paid late and then they will never forget again. We are supposed to be professional adults here, not children who need constant reminders to do things.

Coordinator roles for programs within EPA (e.g., environmental justice, children's health) are unnecessary and lead to grade inflation (GS14s). Instead, there should be workgroups of people whose jobs actually are impacted by the programs with perhaps a management champion, if necessary, on the workgroup.

Move away from block grants. Tie state grants to performance for individual actions. The move to block grants has lead to states knowing that they can ignore parts of the performance partnership agreements and still get all of their money, so they ignore EPA requests to do what they are supposed to. This is bad for the regulated community since the states can take longer to implement a regulation (leading to inconsistency or what appears to be condoning noncompliance with federal requirements). For example, delays of states to adopt new standards or requirements in their state regulations.

The practice of going through HQ for things (e.g., public affairs) slows the process and makes Regional offices less efficient and responsive -- prolonging responses to the media and public at large (including the regulated community).

Less management layers (management does not do day to day work and creates unnecessary layers. For instance in Region 9, the Region switched to Offices instead of Branch/Sections -- This level of management seems better than the extra Section/Branch structure. Also enforcement is better when integrated into the program office instead of its own separate entity. People can have both skills (program and enforcement) instead of overspecialization and be able to follow an action from program through enforcement and back again (better for regulated community). But multi-media is too much (master of none) because then staff cannot learn anything well.

Tablets for inspectors (would allow inspectors to have complete regulations at their fingertips and make report writing faster). Would not need to have cameras as a separate piece of equipment (tablets are all in one).

Coordinated planning for monitoring and inspection needs to be flexible. For instance, water quality monitoring can be planned in advance whereas inspections can be targeted based on new information (e.g., non-compliance, PFOS/PFOA).

Less management layers. Empower employees to send correspondence out under their own signature (leads to more individual accountability). Delegate down whenever possible (e.g., regional pretreatment under the NPDES program to division directors).

1114 5/22/2017

One of the greatest challenges facing this Agency is the oddly out-of-balance world of public sector employee unions. While understanding the importance of ensuring a federal workforce that is apolitical and having mechanisms in place to ensure employees do not suffer from political retributions from changing winds in DC, the over-emphasis this Agency has placed on supporting employee unions has simply gone too far (and remarkably Agency management under both parties goes along with it!). The rules and regulations for addressing performance or conduct matters for underperforming employees are byzantine to say the least. The number of safeguards (mis)used by these employees and their unions make the most basic management functions many times more difficult than they need to be are incredible! While the Administration and Congress look at the larger issue of how employees can challenge adverse actions (through the MSPB, EEOC, OSC and any number of other alphabet soups out there), the Agency should seriously look at its Master Bargaining Agreements and reset them to match the realities of today???'s workforce. Again, I am fully supportive of ensuring public sector workers are free from political interference or retributions, but EPA has taken this to the extreme!

We certainly should look to ensure more effective partnerships with our state/local and tribal partners. However, the nature of our work at the EPA does in fact require a significant federal involvement. The rationale for this is simple: pollution knows no geographic or political boundaries. What happens in one city or state has absolute impacts on neighboring states. However, the important difference is that the neighboring state has little recourse to correct the problem. Additionally, state and local governments have been tightening their belts for a number of years as well. There are simply not the resources at the state and local level to address the critical issues EPA deals with each and every day. I fully acknowledge that EPA has had instances of "mission creep" into the areas of "nice to do" rather than the "have to do." Some areas like Superfund clean ups, enforcement, geographic programs (like the Great Lakes or Chesapeake Bay programs) are absolutely essential to ensuring a clean and safe environment, but can't be left to individual states alone to address (either due to a lack of their own resources or their own lack of will).

I'm not sure "customer service" is the right description for what we do as a federal regulatory agency. Customers are generally defined as "a party that receives or consumes products (goods or services) and has the ability to choose between different products and suppliers. The second part of that definition is key. We are not making and selling widgets. We are charged with implementing environmental statutes passed by Congress and signed by a President. Creating regulations then enforcing them are key to how a regulatory agency works. The notion that our customers (in this case the American people) can take their business to a different source is not realistic in our case.

I think some of the proposals put forth by the Administration are in fact helpful redirection of limited resources. Program like Environmental Justice, Energy Star, Bees and Other Pollinators Protection, BurnWise, Children's Health, Environmental Education, Homeland Security, the EPA libraries, and the Sun Safety programs are all well intentioned, but I'm not sure are required (at least in their current form). These redirect badly needed resources from critical areas such as effective and efficient rulemaking and enforcement.

A basic IT infrastructure that works would be a real shot in the arm!

I think we should certainly look for any ways we can leverage our resources with our federal/state partners. However, the reality is EPA is charged with implementing and enforcing federal laws for a reason. The idea we can simply turn 1/3rd of the Agency's responsibilities over to the states is not a realistic paradigm if we are to in fact protect human health and the environment.

I'm going to answer the inverse of this question (sorry!). EPA has suffered for years as the most stove-piped, badly run organization I have ever seen. While everyone works towards a common goal of protecting human health and the environment, the reality is we are a loose confederation of programs and statutes joined by a common letterhead. Part of this is by the nature we implement our laws. Each AAship has its own authorizing statutes and will implement them as they see fit. I can understand and appreciate that to a certain degree. Work that is done under the CWA may have little to no impact on work being done under the CAA. Where EPA falls down repeatedly is under the headquarters/region structure and the enabling support offices. Too many times the Regions conduct business as their own entity. The Regional Administrators have a tendency to create their own micro-agendas and work towards those. Yes, they generally all point in the same direction of the Agency as a whole, but in many cases we run into situations of neighboring regions focusing on completely different areas. This is problematic for say the residents of Virginia (under Region 3) and North Carolina (under Region 4). The Administrator and Senate confirmed Assistant Administrators should have greater input into how the Regions operate (most especially how they money the send to the Regions gets spent!). On the enabling support side ??? offices like OARM and OEI have to work in a dysfunctional world of needing to get consensus from every AAship and Region before implementing ???enterprise-wide?? solutions. The idea that the Regions do not have to use the same computer infrastructure and support programs as HQ creates technical problems that need addressing (costing money) and preclude economies of scale (like with a hardware refresh). EPA has to start operating like ???OneEPA!??

1115

5/22/2017

CERCLA: Five Year Review Process - Presently, one of the tasks to be documented as part of the 5-yr review process is to answer whether there are any new rules or circumstances that call into question the protectiveness of the remedy. As part of this analysis, the human health risk assessor looks to see if any standards have changed, in particular any standards that have been adopted that render the afore selected cleanup levels, no longer protective of public health. This is good step but it doesn't go far enough into reviewing how the remedy is progressing against the cleanup levels as laid forth in the ROD.

With just a bit more work during the 5-yr reviews, we could save much time and money in CERCLA cleanups, if an evaluation of risk to public health using concentrations present in the environment at the time of the 5 year review were to be performed and compared to not only the current ARARs, but also used to re-evaluate the protectiveness finding (namely, ask whether the risks fall within the acceptable risk range for carcinogens of 10^{-4} to 10^{-6} or less than a HI of 1 for non-carcinogenic effects). In such a manner, one could find one could cut short remediation times because the residual risk fell within the "protective risk range" and complied with all ARARs in effect at the time of the 5 yr review and yet the remedy may not have met each and every cleanup level laid forth in the ROD. Specifically, this could save time and money chasing cleanup levels for non-ARAR compounds that were identified years ago in a ROD that were based on an arbitrary apportionment of risk that was dependent on the number of compounds that had been identified as "of concern" in the baseline risk assessment. Performing a risk assessment on residuals as part of the 5 year review would not sacrifice the overall protectiveness of the remedy, because one would continue to implement the remedy until such time that the residual risks fell within the acceptable risk range. I suggest a policy be established that not only do the residual concentrations of contaminants have to meet the acceptable risk range on one sampling event, but that they be required to meet the acceptable risk range and all ARARs for multiple sampling events (e.g. a few years before) one declare that the remedy is a success. Performing a risk assessment on residuals could be an easy lift for the risk assessor since the exposure pathways and assumptions would all likely be identical to those upon which the ROD was based. Should there be a new pathway of exposure (e.g. vapor intrusion) that hadn't been considered in the ROD, then this pathway should be reflected in the risk evaluation on residuals.

The current process for 5 year reviews - from a risk assessor's perspective, essentially operates as if one has blinders on. It does not take into account that the soup of pollutants present in the environment 5, 10, 15, or 20 years after the ROD was signed, pollutants that may have been removed from the environment, degraded to less or more toxic compounds,

CERCLA: Five Year Review Process

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I am a proud supporter of the President and the Administrator; therefore, I want them both to succeed. I can tell you this from the "rank and file" perspective, the regions and other managers, particularly the regions will NEVER execute the President and Administrator's vision. I would recommend until the Administrator is able to implement the President's vision, that funding, in particular, for the remaining of FY 2017 be solely managed directly from EPA-HQ where the Administrator can keep close tabs on the programs. If the Administrator doesn't do this and continues to forward funding allocations to the Regions, they will fund known and secretive projects to keep the President from implementing his vision. Hopefully, by the time the new fiscal year begins in October 2017, the Administrator will have more staff in place and has a better handle on how he wants things to reflect the President's budget. Most if not all the managers (even to the lowest ranks) have been promoted because they are a part of the "good ole boy network" and staff are suffocating without mentorship, innovativeness, and opportunity, so I would HIGHLY recommend not only reducing managers but changing employee PARS rating to a pass/fail immediately until the Administrator can get a handle on staff reductions and reorganizational efforts. This will minimize employee lawsuits under the new Administrator's watch they he will surely be blamed for. After new policies have been implemented, then the current employee PARS can resume. Currently PARS, particularly at Region 2 are being conducted by non-supervisors which is against the law. If an employee complains, they are punished. Moving forward, it is crucial to identify the role, i.e., Do(s) and Don't(s), of managers at all levels. There is A LOT of wasting money to buy unnecessary items just because, regions don't want to lose the funding. Managers, even all the way down to branch chiefs, have government issued cell phones that they use as their personal cell phones at the government expense. Cell phones SHOULD NOT be issued to certain management levels as it unnecessary. A quick check/run of cell phone usage of each manager will warrant enough evidence to support this claim. For Christ sake, PLEASE hold the SES staff to a higher standard, because they have burrowed into the programs and they have excessive salaries and are NOT cross functional ready. There needs to be a 9-1-1 emergency in getting rid of these SES people who have been at the regions in the same job for 10 years, and replace them with new people. After all, this is why so many of the employee viewpoint survey results are so negative. At the end of the day, there is ABSOLUTELY no employee incentive to be innovative and most employees are treated like "less than." Some regions are continuing to pay movers and construction costs (even as I am typing this feedback) to relocate staff and make unnecessary cosmetic changes amid the FY 2018 projections. There are entirely too many management layers. For example, unless the Administrator sends emails directly to EPA employees, it takes a

Eliminate duplicative efforts. I have experience in processing grants in the past, and I have first hand knowledge that there is a tremendous amount of duplication. As EPA moves forward, I would suggest having a grant processing center where all employees processing grants are in the same location and can process the grants as grants AND not as cooperative agreements. There is a difference in these two labels. Also, please STOP the ACS reporting and bean counting for inspection. They both have NO value. Find a better way to empower employees to upload and certify their own inspections. Direct interaction, less inspections except for oversight or as necessary in case of public health concerns.

Have one point-of-contact for each program and all supporting personnel works with that individual to ensure transparency and to meeting programmatic deadlines.

Instead of having SESs be burrowed in managing staff and them not be spark and innovative, I think it would be great to only use SES staff for high profile and specialty assignments. For example, the Flint Michigan situation should have an SES assigned to that region for a specific set of time to assist and oversee the entire cleanup project. Let the SES be responsible for taking on assessing major conflict projects and opportunities and outreach for the Agency. For individuals who are as highly paid as the SES, they should be challenged more and rotated more and NOT burrowed in. Make it mandatory that SES can only stay at EPA for 3 years maximum and then must rotate to another Agency.

Not sure

Remove duplicated efforts among agencies.

Reduce the amount of cell phones assigned to the overwhelming amount of managers. Remove bad actor managers who have and continue to have multiple employee complaints and lawsuits against them. Faster track with removing managers definitely. Take a look at the amount of money that the Agency has paid out to staff employees due to bad actor and in some case repetitive managers who continue to place the Agency in compromising positions for employee lawsuits. Reassess human resource departments throughout the entire agencies. Some human resource departments are not impartial in matters of employee concerns and automatically take the side of management. Do not allow contractors or Senior Environmental Employees (SEEs) employee to sit in federal space. Require their companies to rent space nearby the facilities in which they work, and make this a requirement of the grant or contract. This will save EPA computer costs, badging costs, training costs, telephone costs, etc.

1117

5/22/2017

EPA should consider to re-designate the Security Management Division to the Office of Security, appoint a senior level manager to lead the Office of Security with a professional intelligence and security pedigree to oversee the various intelligence and Security functions and coordinate the EPA's national intelligence and security needs. The manager must be empowered with the proper authorities to lead these various intelligence and security functions across the agency, report directly to the Administrator and must also have the complete trust, confidence and backing by of the Administrator and Chief of Staff to make this work.

The composition and structure of EPA's Intelligence and National Security functions are bifurcated, including, organizational, budget, composition, focus, and other components. Based upon years of experience and looking at best practices of other more mature federal agencies and departments, is to employ the optimal method of birthing and integrating the Intelligence enterprise and Security functions under one umbrella (Office or Division). Properly organized and staffed, the intelligence and security function serves as an internal consultant to management on physical security, security and intelligence support for the administrator and overall agency program offices. It should be designed as an integrated and organic element of the either the security or intelligence enterprise, not a distinct separate function. Security and Intelligence defines the scope and dimensions of complex issues such as access to classified information, facilities, security clearances, counterintelligence, foreign intelligence, analysis, including terrorism and general intelligence products to support mission programs across the agency. Importantly, it also serves as a focal point for information sharing and dissemination to maximize security awareness across the agency. The history of SMD and OHS has not been a cohesive one, due to lack of competencies in both OHS and SMD, resulting in poor customer service, collaboration and a lack of efficient business processes. Integrating these functions will provide the agency efficiency in operations.

In regards to ORD labs and centers, administrative burden is increasing for scientist's and staff. New requirements for quality assurance, data access and scientific data management plans should use established methods already in use by NIH and NSF rather than making an existing process more complex and should be examined carefully to be certain they do not exceed scope. For example, research designated as high visibility/high impact required review at the level of program offices; this is desirable from the standpoint of the stated purpose, which is increased awareness and review for policy implications. Unfortunately it sometimes becomes burdensome because these reviews go beyond scope, duplicate internal review already accomplished via other mechanisms and increase the review time and delay submission of research results to peer-reviewed journals.

Ask the states, tribes, local communities and private sector what additional help they would like and how they would like to partner with EPA. The listening sessions that have been going on across federal agencies are a good start. Allow more involvement of scientific staff.

Stream-lined review processes that are less subject to delays - all internal review processes should be re-examined in terms of increased time required versus value added.

Development of guideline levels for chemical exposure is done by both EPA's IRIS program and ATSDR, although used for slightly different purposes and having differing review processes, it would be desirable to seek opportunities for collaboration and consolidation.

360 degree evaluation

Contracting at EPA is a major challenge. The contracting staff are under-resourced and often ill equipped to help get things done in an efficient way, and in the last several years, there have been many major contracting snafus that resulted in stop-work or loss of software maintenance or other types of issues due to the processes taking far too long. Contracting staff aren't able to be proactive. Another area that has been difficult is in getting budget clarity, which also adversely impacts ability to strategize, plan and implement.

Within OEI there are a number of things that seem unnecessarily complex and process-oriented, where it comes to IT deployment, such as the ADC process and security documentation.

Another thing that EPA could benefit from tremendously is more training resources, even if they are free and local. Even going to after-hours local technology meetups would be helpful and many EPA staff do those on their own time. Also, there are many very cost-effective forms of training such as Coursera and EdX which provide high-quality training, however going through administrative processes to do this is on the other hand a long process which often results in those training opportunities being missed. More flexibility would be beneficial.

Need to do a better job of showing collaborative data-driven efforts, getting states and other jurisdictions to make more robust use of EPA data, tools and resources as well as having a good set of forums for collaborating and listening to each other's requirements. The Exchange Network Integrated Project Teams (IPTs) begin to try to deal with these but in many ways only scratch the surface, for lack of resources on either side. More pilots and demonstration projects to prove and validate concepts of information exchange, analysis and other uses of the data would be tremendously helpful but resources are lacking for these.

State and local jurisdictions often ask about where they can find better resources for using EPA data, services and tools. They are often scattered around, and lack good developer resources, examples and documentation for partners to easily pick them up and use. These resources are often just put together almost as an afterthought, but we need much more robust support wrapped around them. ODSTA's "Developer Central" and the System of Registries in OIM are some of the better resources that EPA has in that regard but even they are lacking the staff, resources and more robust infrastructure needed.

The biggest area for potential improvement is on the data side. Replace remaining paper-based systems with smart electronic reporting. There are still some processes that even require FAX submissions. These can and should be modernized. Electronic reporting will reduce industry burden, and will speed up reviews, permitting, workflows and approvals, along with making them a lot more efficient and accurate. By "smart electronic reporting" what we should be pursuing is an API-first approach, in which we provide smart web forms for collecting information (which also includes validation of data entered) but under the hood, it also has reusable web services which can be used by state partners, local government, industry, et cetera. For example, if a company has dozens of facilities that it needs to do reporting on, and if they have their own systems for environmental managing, they could plug into EPA APIs for submissions and for checking status. Corporate headquarters offices could develop their own dashboards for tracking compliance, due dates, status, et cetera which would save them considerable resources and reduce potential risks and liabilities.

And finally, EPA could greatly benefit from having more internal staff who are technology savvy. EPA has a lot of excellent staff, whether chemists, lawyers, toxicologists, or other types of people with rich and deep subject matter expertise, and EPA should do everything it can to ensure we have this kind of internal expertise, but one area where EPA is sorely lacking is in IT and applications development expertise. EPA is highly dependent on contractor resources for applications development, and while we have many good contractors, from an overall perspective it leads to inefficiencies, greater costs, stovepiping and broken IT strategy efforts, and occasionally poor technology decisions as EPA staff don't have enough knowledge and experience in those areas.

Better/expanded use of cloud computing and available managed services and Platform-As-A-Service (PAAS) offerings, and streamline how EPA deploys applications (DevOps). Focus on an API-first strategy to make data and services robustly available across the agency. Make better use of sensor technologies and external data sources in concert with our own. Engage in more LEAN events and business process re-engineering to re-evaluate and streamline workflows and processes, and do more automation, whether data refreshing/loading, transformation, QA, et cetera.

There are a lot of common needs across states, tribes, territories and EPA as well as with local government. In many cases it doesn't necessarily make sense and is horribly expensive to re-invent the wheel for every jurisdiction. EPA needs to collaborate closely with state and local government as well as with other federal agencies on data standards and shared services that can let all parties do their work far more efficiently and cheaply.

Containerization, Big Data, DevOps, Continuous Integration, Microservices, and streaming sensor data are far more mature in the private sector than they are at EPA, EPA should continue working toward building these out.

1120 5/22/2017

1121 5/22/2017

1122 5/22/2017

1. Software/process inefficiencies in timekeeping system: If employees need to change a leave request after submitting it in PeoplePlus, they can't take back the request using that system, but instead have to submit a separate request to a manager by email. This is cumbersome and inefficient, and consumes email server and storage resources. The People Plus software should be upgraded to include a built-in request withdrawal and revision system. Also, the People Plus system should be integrated with our Outlook calendars, so that granted absence requests automatically populate the calendar in the right places. As it is, we unnecessarily spend time retyping leave requests into our calendars. Finally, revise People Plus so that it can show more than five accounting codes at once. There's no reason people should keep having to click back and forth between pages, and it adds up to significant lost time.
2. Password updates: Employee time is consumed by changing, remembering, and recovering our many passwords, all of which need frequent changing. The system is unsecure because people resort to easily remembered passwords, or even write them down. We need better password integration, or even better get reliable password management software.
3. Ediscovery resources: OEI needs more resources to support FOIA and ediscovery. We spend far more time on FOIA reviews than we should because we have an outdated version of Relativity that doesn't support deduplication or predictive coding. Also, frequent system slowdowns and crashes slow the process. OEI needs more resources to support these functions.
4. Cut advisor overload: Decrease number of advisors in Agency front offices; emphasize communicating with the relevant programs directly.
5. Records management: Develop effective and efficient way to manage EPA email and texts as Agency records where needed. Focus on digitizing existing paper records and on making new record storage 100% digital. Make digitally stored records searchable directly by the public if they are not exempt from disclosure.
6. Collaboration: Increase effectiveness of Sharepoint by integrating it with EPA records and FOIA processes.

I do CWA enforcement. In our Regional office, there are simply too many documents and processes that are required of a new case, before I can even get an attorney assigned. These same documents then have to be redone as we get more information about the case.

1. Strong oversight of delegated/approved state and tribal programs.
2. Assessment of gaps in regulations that allow a race to the bottom effect among states, followed by promulgation of new regulations to fill these gaps.
3. Strong support for EPA enforcement programs. This is necessary to avoid giving a short-term competitive advantage to states that weaken their own programs.
4. Increase emphasis on sustainability in our own operations, and provide relevant information about it to the public and partners. Explore ways to build sustainability requirements into our grant and oversight processes.

Remove this idea that EPA has to always be the lead on enforcement.. In my program (404 CWA Enforcement) there is too much emphasis in taking on cases just to pad the "numbers" for OCE. So we aren't always taking "good cases" or we are trying to take on cases that are best resolved by our other federal (COE), state or local partners.

1. More affirmative online posting of environmental information.
2. Abbreviate the OMB review process for EPA rulemakings.
3. In rulemaking and other agency actions, ensure that benefits are considered as well as costs.
4. Restore and implement the CPP and WOUS rule. Clean air and water are good service.
5. End excessive political review and oversight of FOIA responses, including consultation about White House equities. Issue a "fishbowl memorandum" clearly mandating transparency.
6. Reinstate consideration of social costs of carbon and other greenhouse gas impacts in NEPA reviews.

Let us do more with outreach and compliance assistance (compliance assistance has been deemphasized the last couple of years).

1. End political review and oversight of FOIA responses. Mandate transparency.
2. Reduce political-approval bottlenecks for routine Agency actions.

As much as it would be unfavorable for me and other employess, the amount that EPA matches each employee in their TSP account could be reduced in order to reduce costs.

1. FOIAonline needs improvement and integration with EPA systems (e.g. Relativity).
2. Upgrade to the current version of Relativity.
3. Obtain cloud-based storage of text messages sent and received on Agency mobile phones.
4. Automatically post all senior officials??? calendars online for public viewing.
5. Work to further streamline litigation hold system to make releasing outdate holds easier, limit the scope of existing holds to what is necessary, and make notifications and questionnaires more effective and efficient.

Well we could all use better training just on the tools and technologies that we already have.

Increase enforcement programs in areas where state efforts are lacking.

Establish more local agreements to provide better alignment (and coordination) between State and Federal partners on enforcement.

1. Password management software
2. Cloud-based text storage

In the 404 CWA program, our Region's hold Field Level Agreement meetings w/ our state and federal partners to go over case development, information exchange, and development of better coordination/communication procedures.

1123 5/22/2017

1124 5/22/2017

1125 5/22/2017

1126 5/22/2017

The Agency needs to have a better mechanism for addressing poor performance and/or dismissing non-performers from the Agency.

Correspondence - change agency practice/policy so that staff can submit an electronic copy of a memo or other document needing management approval and can stop wasting money and time preparing those same documents in hard copy that inevitably get changes before they are finalized. As envisioned, the document would be routed electronically, edits made electronically, and only the final version (ready for signature) would be printed out into a "formal signature package." Saves paper and time and reduces our carbon footprint by using less paper.

Increasing staff levels at EPA will result in achieving better environmental results.

Increasing staff levels at EPA will enable us to provide better customer service. Reducing staff will make it very difficult to provide customer service.

Having online systems such as FOIA, that require you to login and change your password even though you haven't needed to use the system for months, is a hugely stupid waste of time and resources.

Making good use of senior EPA employees. Their institutional knowledge would improve efficiency, and their core beliefs and integrity would increase accountability.

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When I cannot easily find the solution to a equipment or EZ Tech problem, I can only call EZ Tech to get support. We need to modernize our EZ tech customer service so that we SHARE SOLUTIONS (e.g. a SharePoint site) in a common space. For example, if there is a problem with your iPhone, people will try to search Google to find how others resolved the issue, you may never have to call someone for help. If EPA could modernize their EZ Tech customer service so that we could share solutions, EPA could save money on their EZ Tech customer support contract and operate more like a modern effective customer service provider.

Community involvement documents (such as a fact sheet or brochure) must fit within a narrow selection of templates. These templates are outdated and make the agency feel archaic. If you want to develop a new style for a community involvement document, it can take many months to get approval. By then, the community involvement need has passed and was not met.

EPA should do User Research to identify how different groups seek customer service from EPA and pilot programs to engage with those groups better. For instance, the states may be seeking a communication platform which could be hosted in e-Enterprise while the public at large may interface with specific EPA web pages or social media accounts.

Public involvement and community outreach activities at the project level must be approved by headquarters. This is nonsense. It creates a bureaucratic nightmare and prevents EPA from being able to react efficiently to community needs. Trust employees at the regional level to make the right decisions.

Yes, there are untapped opportunities to automate and lean administrative (e.g. financial or HR) work processes. We can leverage technology to develop automated solutions so employees can focus on mission related work instead of being burdened by administrative work.

There are three technologies: cloud hosting, human centered design practices, and cybersecurity.

The faster we migrate from on-premise hosting (i.e. NCC servers) to cloud service offerings (AWS), the quicker we can save money on hosting costs. The existing on-premise hosting service at the NCC is not accountable to responding to customers and there are people in processes where there could definitely be automation, which makes for a very cost and time intensive process. To do this migration effectively, EPA employees needed to be properly trained in modern software development practices.

Human centered design (HCD) practices is a methodology for creating more effective and meaningful processes in any field (software products, workflows, etc.) because the process is user driven, not stakeholder driven. For software products, you base the development on the needs and behaviors of the user and iteratively test potential solutions before rolling out a final solution. EPA can create more meaningful and effective solutions and processes if we apply human centered design practices in all of our work.

Also, we need to modernize and adequately support OEI's Information and Privacy office. It appears the OEI cybersecurity team is focused on maintaining present day security operations, and not actively adapting and maturing their activities to accomodate modern cybersecurity issues. By not adapting and maturing cybersecurity activities, EPA is at risk of maintaining older more costly security processes.

There is a great amount of potential for EPA to improve how we work (efficiently, with accountability, and reducing costs) if EPA adopts and matures into a organization that uses human centered design to deliver our work products. Check out the human centered design work at IDEO and Pivotal.

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1130 5/22/2017

1131 5/22/2017

Yes. Staff spend unnecessary time on document review for FOIA, litigation, and congressional requests because we are not making efficient use of document review tools and because we are not managing records efficiently. The Relativity document review software needs to be upgraded to 9.4 and the analytics tools (de-duplication and e-mail threading) need to be functional so that staff do not have to waste time and resources reviewing multiple copies of documents for litigation purposes, FOIA, and congressional requests. This is a fairly simple issue that needs to be resolved but requires funding and technical support staff to implement correctly. In addition, we need to procure and utilize better record protocols so records are properly organized and categorized as they are created.

It would be better to be able to finalize our MaxiFlex schedule electronically, rather than print and sign a paper copy.

Make it easier to transfer between agencies. Since becoming employed at EPA I have received an advanced degree better suited to NASA/FAA/DOT/NOAA. I've interviewed several times. But EPA does not have reciprocal agreements in place that would allow me to do a detail in one of those agencies. It's past time for EPA to engage with it's sister agencies and share employee resources.

Stop threatening to slash EPA's budget and don't cripple the work we are supposed to do.

<http://blogs.edf.org/markets/2017/04/24/why-the-epa-gives-taxpayers-the-biggest-bang-for-their-hard-earned-buck>

Support tribal sovereignty in every extent. Don't trust the states with global impacts, federal standards are there for a reason and need more enforcement, not less.

Performance reviews for managers by staff. This would root out problem managers that have destroyed office morale.

Cross agency platforms. Data centers. Ending the use of contractors and utilizing federal employees, which would be cheaper and faster.

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Cross train attorneys as inspectors so that they can enforce first instance.

Combine agencies under a greater authority.

Yes. The Relativity document review software needs to be upgraded to 9.4 and the analytics tools (de-duplication and e-mail threading) need to be functional so we are competitive with the private sector and keeping up with other agencies.

No, my organization needs a total overhaul.

1132 5/22/2017

1133 5/22/2017

The clean water act as implemented in NPDES permits should recognize that treated effluent can be a resource, especially in the arid Western areas of the country. EPA should be allowed to legally provide flexibility in the requirements imposed to make optimum use of the effluent.

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EPA should delegate the NPDES program to Tribes who have demonstrated the capacity and resources to be the permitting authority on their land. This will reduce the burden on EPA to directly issue permits on Tribal land.

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A program for exchange of staff on a temporary basis (anywhere from 6 months to a few years) between EPA and state, tribe and local regulatory agencies would provide for better and more seamless customer service to states, tribes, and local communities.

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The internet of things is a concept that could have tremendous benefits to the environment while reducing costs and inefficiencies. Instead of requiring manual monitoring of parameters in NPDES permits, and parameter that can be monitored automatically by equipment should be automatically transmitted to EPA. This will give a more accurate and timely picture of the environment while quickly identifying issues that could pose risk

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See answer to Q. 4 above

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EPA should revisit its understanding with the USFWS to make ESA consultation more timely, efficient and accurate.

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It has always been clear that our HQ office staff has grade inflation. For the same staff level work we do in the regions, the HQ staff are one grade higher. This is indefensible and should be ended.

Our time keeping software is not up to date. Your actual work schedule should be automatically populated and all the holidays should automatically be included. There is no reason to have to manually enter all this. Secondly we need the most current software for FOIA's - "Relativity". We are using a three year old version of Relativity and it is inefficient to use for responding to FOIA requests. I am working on a FOA for a year so far and part of the problem is the inefficient software.

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Over time, I feel that there has been more emphasis on re-development after cleanup. This is a really powerful way to get States, Tribes, local communities and the private sector to buy into our cleanups more broadly. The Agency should continue to increase our efforts to find re-development opportunities and ease concerns about future liability (for non-labile landowners only).

In the Superfund program, I feel that outreach with States, Tribes, locals and the regulated community is very strong. This is evidenced by our continued work with ASTSWMO, tribal consultation policy, and community outreach programs. Where the regulated community is cooperative (and even where they are not), I think the SF program has tried to clearly lay out our basis for pursuing certain cleanup strategies.

I think there could be more efforts made in OEI to reduce (or streamline) the number of proprietary databases across the Agency. While SharePoint could replace many of these existing databases, there is no option currently at EPA to access SharePoint on your mobile device. This is hampering more widescale use of an already available, functional tool.

Make EPA's eDiscovery tools more robust by purchasing newer technologies that have become industry standard not only in the private legal sector but also at other federal agencies, as well as investing in long overdue IT infrastructure upgrades (e.g., new servers) to support newer and future technologies.

Similar to my response in Q4, I think SharePoint is an existing tool that we don't use broadly enough in the Agency. If there could be a more concerted effort to build expertise in SharePoint among staff throughout the Agency, I believe we can leverage this technology and reduce costs Agency-wide. Lotus Notes was partially replaced a few years ago but more effort should be made to retiring all components of it.

I think more partnerships and coordination within the Federal interagency at both the management and staff levels would promote greater collaboration in times of need.

Upgrading EPA's eDiscovery tools to align with private sector standards and other federal agencies' adoption will improve our efficiency in responding to obligations in litigation, Freedom of Information Act, and miscellaneous administrative obligations. Our current eDiscovery offering requires EPA employees/contractors to spend at least 2 times the amount of time reviewing and preparing documents for litigation or FOIA, delaying or negatively impacting the quality of the final product in a time when litigation and FOIA requests are at an all-time high.

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The new administration's lack of efficiency with respect to nominating the appropriate political appointees is preventing EPA from moving forward with the much needed environmental policies that are needed to further prevent pollution of the environment.

Many of our financial systems are antiquated (IRMS) and don't correspond with other financial systems well (compass). This allows poor reports, inability to track progress down to a lower level. etc.

Better environmental results cannot be achieved by rolling back environmental legislation. Also, delegating regulation to states does not make environmental regulation more effective. To the contrary it provides a patchwork of environmental legislation that is not uniform or enforceable.

I live OK. We should do a better job working with the tribes on environmental stewardship, remediation efforts, etc. We have a lab that is world famous for ground water/subsurface remediation (especially heavy metals and chlorinated solvents).. Huge superfund sites such as tar creek located in the Pitcher, OK has never been a part of our research efforts. In the state of OK there are numerous tribes (with deep pockets) that have been very enterprising/productive business entities as well as the tribal government side. We should work more with tribes in OK via cooperative agreements.

The agency has made great leaps and bounds in providing great customer service in the past 20 years under previous administrations.

We need to be more active with the tribes and states. Most of the states are broke, they need us more than ever. However, many of the budget cuts seem to be given more power back to the states. States would like to have the power and less government control, however, they don't have the money to make things happen.

We are already operating at a staffing level that is at a 20 year low. The proposed EPA budget cuts by the White House, including the proposed reduction in staff will only cripple our ability to provide a high level of environmental protection for Americans.

You can increase funding for FTE so that EPA can increase staff. This will allow EPA to operate efficiently.

I think ORD has done a great job in realigning the business side of things (purchasing ,contracts, etc).

ORD initiated lines of business (called OARS) . OARS supports all the labs. Instead of each location having their own set of COs, CORs, SACOs, FCOs, extramural expertise, etc. Many of us are scattered out across the US. When one is out of leave, one of the other OARS staff makes sure nothing sits and it keeps moving.

having to access lotus notes for agency memos and updates--remove and eliminate this program

multiple logins need to be eliminated. If I have access to the program, then I need only to log into the secure network and have access to what I need for my job.

The states have become dependent on the government for money to pay staff and have environmental programs. If they become responsible for funding these programs, then they will invest in the resources and expertise to manage and implement them.

Without this need, they will continue to expect handouts and never grow their respective programs.

time reporting is an electronic system that should not require us to enter time nearly 1 week prior to the end of the pay period. Doing this means that every two weeks an amendment needs to be completed. Therefore time and effort are spent on the same 2-week time period twice. Enter time the following week; only a short one pay period inconvenience will be noticed.

this saves time and money by eliminated an unnecessary revision every two weeks.

Everyone needs to clock in and out. an electronic system exists for credit hour schedules. this can be adopted for everyone.

Eliminates those coming in late, leaving early, and taking extra long lunches. People are now responsible for being here on time and leaving on time.

Whether they do work is another matter, but at least they will be in the office.

1140

5/22/2017

Yes. Information governance/content management/document management software. This Agency spends a huge amount of time searching for documents responsive to FOIAs, Congressional requests and litigation discovery. If we were to invest on the front end in commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) software that has been used by private industry for decades to track all information as it is created, and has native search features to find that information when needed, we would be able to slash dramatically the amount of time we spend on manual searches or the hundreds of thousands of dollars we have paid employees and contractors to search using the antiquated and inefficient tools offered by OEI's Office of Enterprise Information Programs. We may also save on paying attorneys fees for failing to meet statutory or court-ordered deadlines for production of information. Funds currently expended on these tasks could be diverted to core programs that more directly protect the health and the environment of all Americans.

1141

5/22/2017

EPA could most certainly become more effective and efficient if the systems we use were connected to one another and were not so terrible. Words can't describe the FPPS system, which managers use for personnel actions, awards and training paperwork. The system defies description --- it is full of bugs, looks like it was developed in 1987 and, most importantly, takes hours and hours of managers' time as we blunder through it. Also, most of our systems don't talk to each other. I strongly believe that an efficiency expert focusing on technology could probably make reasonable suggestions in no time. Our own IT people just roll out "new" system after system that are designed to stump and torture staff and employees, rather than help them be more efficient.

In my region, we are reinvigorating quarterly meetings with our states. I think that more face-to-face time improves our ability to interact -- even if we have disagreements over certain matters.

I wonder if EPA can set up a "suggestion box" type of thing that states, tribes and municipalities could use to make suggestions. Not sure how this would work -- we'd want it to be limited and not widely public. Perhaps we can work through orgs such as ECOS, National Govs Association, or Leagues of Municipalities to gather input.

See above.

PLEASE take a close look to see if we can get a different version of Outlook that will allow us to reliably search for emails. People can no longer reliably search emails older than 90 days or search for items that may result in more than 250 results. This means most FOIA requests involving emails are run through OEI. Ridiculous and completely avoidable in my opinion. Can we please explore our options to see if we can get an upgraded version of Outlook that allows us to be able to search our own emails? Might cost more up front, but would eliminate a staff of people who have to use a work-around to search emails for the entire agency AND would allow those of us who need to refer back to emails to do so (there is no option there -- as OEI will only search emails related to FOIA requests. If I want to see an email about an important meeting from a few years ago, I would have to submit a FOIA for my emails records about that meeting. Does that make any sense at all?

The EPA Acquisition System (EAS) is a very slow, cumbersome system that causes work to be done slowly and inefficiently. I have worked at DoD and their acquisition is much faster and more efficient. Recommend that the EPA look to move to a better system, whether it is the one DoD uses or a different one.

The finance office at RTP manually enters all contracts and purchase orders manually into their finance system. Then when a contractor submits an invoice (even by email) they have to manually enter that into the system. Recommend that finance develop (or use the same as another agency uses) an electronic invoicing system and incorporate a method where an awarded action automatically feeds into the invoice payment system. Manually entering this data in the 21st century is wasteful.

The financial system used by DoD for contracts/purchase orders should be incorporated at EPA. The system allows for the actions to be electronically input into the payment system and then the contractors invoice electronically and payments are made. This system is far more efficient than our current system of manual entries.

We use multiple timekeeping systems, which leads to inefficiencies. Our records system should be modernized and consolidated so that records can be accessed more readily, which would lead to efficiencies for FOIA requests and discovery requests. For instance, an electronic filing system that includes all records for a particular facility (for all statutes) should be developed. Through this system, records that are not confidential could be accessible to the public.

Our States rely on EPA's assistance with implementation of their environmental programs and routinely request assistance. EPA should retain its role in partnering with states where assistance is requested, but also ensure that the state's responsibilities and commitments are being met through its oversight role in order to insure a level playing field across the country. This creates a level of consistency and certainty for the private sector regardless of where it operates.

Addressed in Questions 1 and 2.

We upgraded to new laptops in 2015. When these are placed in "sleep" or "hibernate" mode at the end of the workday, they do not resume the next workday without a hard restart. This is extremely inefficient, as the previous day's work cannot be resumed in a timely manner. For example, some projects require reference to numerous adobe acrobat files, word documents, excel documents, and internet files. With previous computers, these documents could remain open (with the computer securely locked via password and in "sleep" or "hibernate" mode) until the next workday, allowing you to resume work on the project the next day without searching for and reopening all the relevant materials. This is a known issue for the IT department, with no solution since 2015, and likely causes losses in productivity for many employees.

There are too many administrative requirements for managing grants - especially continuing program grants. These policies need to be streamlined, rather than creating a new protocol or database every time the IG does an audit. All electronic grant files need to be stored in ONE database. We should not have to upload the same documents to multiple databases. All grant files should be electronic, rather than having to also maintain a paper copy - which takes up file room space, and has to be managed/maintained by contractors.

To the extent possible, all EPA employees should be working from home full time. With Agency-issued laptops and remote access to the EPA server, most jobs can seamlessly be conducted from home. The Agency should still have a location where employees can have meetings, when necessary, and store documents that cannot be kept at the home location (CBI), but it would be small (like the COOP in Addison, TX). Real estate costs could be reduced dramatically if this recommendation was implemented.

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The length of time it takes to get contract paperwork approved prohibits my ability to get my work done, in two important ways. First, to avoid a stop work situation, I need to develop a statement of work and budget estimate 6 months in advance of the start date of an option year. At that point, I have only fairly general information about the work that will need to be done, decreasing the agency's ability to predict costs accurately and decreasing my ability to usefully evaluate the contractor for their adherence to the budget. It also increases the likelihood of needing modifications once the task order is in place, increasing the total administrative overhead to do the same work. In the case where the paperwork doesn't get through in time and contractors are unable to work for us, I am not able to accomplish my work in a timely way. This situation could be remedied by increasing hiring, or by simplifying contracting procedures.

Our IT infrastructure fails to keep up with advances in the market. We have a webconferencing tool, for instance, that fails to provide key capability. In my case, that includes accessing a list of attendees, or poll results, after the webinar has ended. This is just one example. I will say that it has improved markedly in the 7 years I've been at the agency.

Make required training for contracts and health and safety more tailored to employee's job responsibilities. Current training is often not relevant to my work (e.g., using DOD contracts training).

Make software for tracking time (People Plus), travel (Concur) training (Skillport, FAITAS) easier/faster to use.

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Hiring process and rules

The reorganization of the Montana office has been difficult but not impossible, I value that my supervisor sets clear expectations, allows flexibility when she can, and is committed to being open minded. It has limited some paperwork; I think we have taken a huge loss in relationships with our tribes and state counterparts. Consultations with Tribes never happen anymore and I find that our State counterparts are confused/hesitation to reach out for guidance.

Many areas of EPA regulatory oversight are now being hung up in HQs review, for instance treatment as a state approvals for tribes and certain enforcement actions. It would be better if HQs had the ability to review and approve these actions quicker.

We do a great job now! Hard to envision how we could do better.

hold tribes accountable by actually deterring non-compliance instead of holding hands and providing empty ultimatums; escalate timely and appropriately. More involvement at a observation level with States.

We need to be able to meet with state partners more, so have better travel budgets. We also need to have sufficient resources to review state and tribal programmatic submittals, such as drinking water primacy packages, SIPs, and CWA submittals including water standards. Right now, we do not have enough personnel to do this.

We do a lot now.

Having more time and resources to provide, outreach, transparency, technical/compliance assistance. While we get no credit for these items through NPM, PPA, Strategic plans, or anything; they are vital to our success. There is more to work than numbers from an outdated database.

If need be, we could have a call center to take in calls from the public and provide information where and when available.

auto-dialer for reminders for water operators, better microphones in conference rooms(they are terrible, we do a lot of VTC and other remote gathers), electronic tracking of documents for concurrence(this consumes my life and is painstaking), better communication and transparency with data.

Maintaining a robust enforcement presence is essential, especially in support of state and/or tribal programs. Also, there are many cases that the state or locals cannot or will not pursue due to political or other concerns, and we should maintain our ability to pursue these cases. Enforcement personnel also bring money into the federal treasury by obtaining penalties, obtain great environmental results through injunctive relief and SEPs (which are often sought after by defendants/respondents), and help level the playing field.

Enough modernization! Can't keep up with changes as it is.

auto dialer for compliance reminders and electronic tracking of documents

OEI needs more resources to be able to provide support to the Regions, in particular to processing FOIAs. For instance, we need to get quicker at performing Outlook searches, and downloading documents to Relativity. We also need to enable the ability for OEI to download Lotus Notes emails and documents into Relativity.

We have a different mission and different responsibilities, that's why the work is housed in different agencies

meeting frequently to establish relationship, trust and transparency; have management coordinate between programs and ARAs even more; combine enforcement with the drinking water program(problem solved)

We can better coordinate with states and locals, as well as other federal agencies, in regard to regular meetings to identify and discuss potential enforcement targets. We can also host and sponsor more trainings, or send our inspectors to state/local trainings. Continued collaboration with our partners (both state and federal) is vital, but takes a certain amount of resources and personnel to make it happen.

reorganizing compliance monitoring in drinking water to PWS classification instead of by rule; this limits the amount of contacts an operator must remember or talk to; allows more holistic management of compliance; better congruent transition to enforcement and improvement to communications

1150 5/22/2017

1151 5/22/2017

I work with too many people who seem to feel that their job is to kill projects, obstruct completing tasks, or ignore things they don't like until they go away. That should not be acceptable. If you work for EPA, and haven't produced anything in the last ??? years, then you should probably leave. In my office, every work product has to be reviewed by 15 random staffers, in addition to managers. This is a waste of time -- those 15 people should focus their energy on their own tasks, and leave managing to managers.

What keeps me from being efficient and effective are the new procedures for getting communications approved. Apparently, review is done only at the top level in OPA for all EPA communications. Highly inefficient. Previously, press responses were approved at AA level and then at staff or mid-management level in OPA. Now, the agency totally misses most press deadlines. Perhaps that is on purpose. Review/approval for social media and other communications projects seems to be the same. It's ridiculous and controlling. Not necessary; we're professionals.

Better information transparency. We need to work on developing tools to share the data that we have in accessible, easy to use tools. Right now, you can't easily download a map of where Superfund sites are. If we want to partner with states, tribes, communities, and businesses, we need to be able to explain what we're doing, where, how, and why. Right now, so much information is buried in PDFs (that might be hard to access) that it's embarrassing. More investment in enterprise data management systems and dashboards.

Continue to fund partnership agreements with states. We have a productive and cooperative relationship with states through ASTSTWMO. This helps build state capacity and facilitates states/feds working together to solve tough issues. In the President's proposed budget, there would be little or no funds to continue this relationship. How does that fit with the Administration's call to return more responsibility back to the states?

Hold staff accountable for answering inquiries. Half the time, inquiries go to contractors with little or no oversight. Make contact information easily accessible, and encourage staff to develop a customer service mindset. Make it clear that being unhelpful or rude is not acceptable/

I do not think it will be possible to provide good customer service to local communities or the public under this Administration in regard to environmental protection.

Identify duplicative projects across offices, or find complementary projects and share resources. Encourage collaboration. Expect results.

I wish we made people do their own jobs at EPA. I work with too many people who are essentially intermediaries for a contractor: they take my request, pass it on to a contractor, wait around until they get the deliverable, and give it to me. Why are we paying that person, when we could just work with the contractor? Or, we could SAVE MONEY, and ask our full time staff to *do their jobs*.

I do not believe the Administration intends to maintain environmental protection for all Americans.

Better IT: hire real developers and IT professionals, or scientists and analysts who are more current in their experience. I came from the IT group at a large chemical company, where we were doing so many cool, innovative things -- and I'm embarrassed by the state of things at EPA. Often, our IT staff don't even know how to program (we have a GS-15 'developer' in my office who has a 30 year old degree in library science).

Empower offices to try new things, work together, and innovate. Push hard for agile development and delivering tangible results.

Greater use of technology to support telework. Improve and enhance the use of Skype or similar video conferencing. Improved teleconferencing capabilities and service. We still have managers who are dubious and distrustful of telework, and we still have conference rooms where phones don't work and internet access is poor. It's the 21st century!

I think better coordination, and proactive cooperation (instead of reactively fixing problems only after they're discovered) would be beneficial.

I do not think EPA should be realigned/merged with other federal agencies in regard to cleanup programs for federal facilities. While we have shared responsibility, we cannot mix the responsible party role with regulatory oversight and enforcement.

We might consider shared satellite locations as a modification to telework. Currently, the alternate work location is the employee's home. What about a shared location on a local college campus? Employees could use telephones, computer stations with printers, etc. only a few minutes from their home, thus avoiding a long commute and worsening traffic.

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I believe that adding all internal and external videos to the Office of Multimedia is a waste of government resources.
I believe that internal videos can shown only by EPA can have a more streamlined approval process

I believe that the review process in EPA is transparent and the public and private companies can comment on EPA deliverables in the docket. I actually believe EPA is much more transparent than other forms of government.

Increased assistance in the form of financial and expertise support from EPA in both HQ and the Regions.

Eliminate telecommuting or flexi-place.

I believe that many of the EPA ideas and communication could be better discussed through video. However, the current process of approving videos is over regulated and people do not use videos as a communication tool as a result.

Increased education utilizing various means to address both sophisticated and less advanced stakeholders. Examples may include in person meetings, webinars, conferences, forming partnerships with key associations, open calls and targeted communication.

Eliminate telecommuting or flexi-place.

I believe IT innovations as Youtube videos, wiki, and other forms of social media could be used more effectively

Continue to work with underserved communities and those that have the ability to use EPA's resources and pass them on to others for increased environmental stewardship.

I believe that SharePoint and its existing features good be a great knowledge database for transfer of information. I believe that industry also provides models and databases that could be integrated at EPA more efficiently. For example, I believe there is more BIG DATA tools, and web efficiencies using open literature which would eliminate costly regulations. I believe risk assessment offers an intriguing aspect for assessing real vs perceived risks.

I believe databases and models could be aligned and work functions could be better streamlined

Eliminate telecommuting or flexi-place. The Wall Street Journal reported on Friday, May 19, 2017, that more and more companies are abandoning work at home options. Most recently IBM did so. Those that did not want to return to the office were released. This reduced head count.

I believe OPPT QSAR approach is eliminating the need for costly toxicity studies

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Management procedure: Discharge permits are reviewed and commented on by the entire permitting staff. Then the permitting unit chief reviews and comments on them as does the permitting administrative person. After that they still are looked at by two additional levels of management before being signed and issued. This adds about 45 days or so for each review and there are two reviews. One for public notice and one for issuing. So an additional 3 months is added to the permitting process.

I would cut off the two upper level management reviews. I think the RAs and their assistants have much more important things to do than review every permit multiple times.

I think the current administration has a lot of nerve asking these questions so as to help you reduce EPA.

Creating more stakeholder groups that allow the community to feel a better buy-in and connectivity to the work that is done not only on the federal level but the state/local level as well. If we are trying to increase compliance assistance, build a group of community members aligned with the issue. This creates an extra barrier for enforcement of the issues we are working on in that community.

Field offices in the states rather than having everyone concentrated in one, large, regional office. That way we can meet with our partners, face to face, on a frequent basis to discuss and work out any problems affecting the partnership. Also, as state capital field offices are often in lower cost locality pay areas, this would save on payroll costs and travel costs. Facility costs would need to be explored but those lower cost locality pay areas often have lower rent or lease costs also. EPA Region 10, in Seattle did a study that showed a large savings by having state field offices as compared to moving everyone to Seattle.

We already do this.

Have all staff receive project management training to learn how to better juggle priorities. This will allow room for better customer service.

Be on the ground where they are so you can visit to listen to their problems and see examples. That makes it much easier to come up with solutions.

We already do this.

Encourage more older staff to do the phased retirement so that the knowledge can be passed on. Merge some sections that are doing similar work.

Could we make the CFRs more readable? My main example is 40 CFR 122.42(e)(5) concerning nutrient management plans. I had an environmental engineer call for help because they could not figure out what a nutrient management plan needed in it or how to write it. That regulation completely confused them. There has got to be easier language that is still legally defensible.

I think asking EPA employees to identify areas where cuts can be made by an already cut-happy administration is outrageous.

Encourage the use of more webinars

No ideas here.

See answer to question 4 above.

No ideas here.

No ideas here.

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Takes a very long time (weeks) to get any changes made with OPM

Using three different systems to log time (people plus, webforms for telework, and hard copy forms for travel comp time).

Integrated systems would go a long way. Each entity has their own database and filing systems. It would greatly reduce processing times for cases to have a unified database.

More stiff penalties for repeat/serious violators.

Lifting the hiring freeze would help. It is my job to increase efficiencies in my subject matter area at EPA, and it is difficult to do that when understaffed.

integrated databases with states, local, and tribal governments

Our technology and processes for responding to FOIA requests are dismal. We need additional technical resources, such as access to Relativity (with full functionality) to improve our response and review time. Further, FOIA Online is not indexed and easily searched.

Maintain and increase the consistency of environmental protection nation-wide. If a family takes a road trip through the U.S. from state to state, they should be secure in knowing that the air quality, water quality, and toxicity of products/pesticides are consistent. "Protecting Human Health and the Environment" is not an area of government in which states and other federal agencies should be allowed to go weaker than EPA's standards.

Continue the Digital Government Strategy:

<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/omb/egov/digital-government/digital-government.html>

Thank you.

Cut out all unnecessary paperwork and processes for procurement and acquisition. The FAR and EPAAR have created extra work that costs the government more money and takes three times as long to procure an item or service. In addition, the EPA has chosen not to hire a robust workforce for OAM, resulting in extremely poor service and results. Allow managers to approve purchases and hold people accountable who willfully and neglectfully misuse taxpayer funds. Get rid of the useless policies and procedures which ensures the government will pay more and not get what they need when they need it.

Keep it simple. Don't focus on new technologies to become more efficient or effective, Focus on not making poor decisions, policies, procedures that only add steps to the work and causes us to move slower and produce less. Most times in government, having capable leaders that will hold people accountable is the right solution because then you get a motivated and empowered workforce. As long as you keep looking for a new thing or technology, you ignore the most important factor in having a great organization and that is a good leader who actually knows what they are doing and can correct problems.

I would say that contracting procedures have often prevented efficient accomplishment of goals in the past. In some cases, performance time has been inconsistent. Also, interpretation of rules has been inconsistent. Some of this may be based on externalities, such as fear of investigation, and some on management effectiveness (or lack thereof).

From what I have gathered, personnel processes can also be variable.

More flexibility is a good thing. Sometimes we need to step back from what the rules say and try to observe what actually accomplishes environmental quality goals most efficiently or cost-effectively. We also get lost in a power game among all the players, and it causes more friction over time. Understand that getting a site cleaned or keeping it clean is more important than dotting every "i" and crossing every "t."

We may need to revisit old regulations and reform them, or even ask for changes in the laws to keep up with our environmental progress.

Recognize property rights as another path to achieving and maintaining environmental quality.

First of all, recognize that they are customers who need immediate feedback, as the public pays our salary. Personally, I respond to all inquiries within one business day or find a way to have the inquiry answered if I am not available. Some EPA employees receive a large number of inquiries because our names and numbers are published on a public web site, whereas other employees do not experience the same responsibilities. However, all employees should be sensitive to the need for our internal and external customers to receive fast and friendly service.

We need to have good access to our information at our fingertips and try to prevent "loss" of data we have collected over the years as software/hardware systems become obsolete. We could use our own "FAQ page" to help staff find answers quickly to the most frequent types of inquiries we receive from the public.

We should also be willing to take more responsibility when we screw up.

Have more reliable systems that do not crash.

Better integration of systems that do not require transcribing of information (and therefore greater possibility of error).

More frequent modernization of systems to achieve these goals.

Lots, no doubt!

Shared research results. Understanding that other agencies are also regulated by us and can be involved earlier in decision making.

National Science Foundation has a great grant management and review system, from what I have heard. States are using more mobile technology to cut reporting times for inspections.

Better understanding of project goals happens in a lot of the private sector. For EPA, we can use this knowledge not only to understand steps and deadlines better, but also why we may not need to perform certain tasks.

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We are required to put in a training form for zero cost classes - seems silly. We are now also required per OARM to put zero dollar PR's for simple changes. i.e. adding someone to the contract as an alternate COR. There should also be a concerted effort from the office of the administrator to update all conference rooms. The conference room space is terrible. Hard to hear, not always TV's, and when the specific media office does update, they restrict other offices from using the space. It is key to have this be a top down investment that is open to all. Start with larger offices and then move into the smaller ones.

The trainings to become a COR are terrible and extremely time consuming. I needed to take 54 hours of confusing online training that delayed my other projects and taught very little real-life skills.

I would say that there should be larger more coordinated grants when working with the states and tribes. Requiring EPA to coordinate with other media offices seems key. We have tried to coordinate with other offices in the past, but there isn't much incentive to sharing or coordinating grant monies when a lot of the money is tied to a specific office budget. Maybe pool money as an incentive from the office of the administrator.

We need to hold polluters accountable for the damage that cause to our communities. Taxpayers cover far to many clean up costs.

In the pollution prevention program, we work very closely with our grantees to encourage sharing of best practices between and among the grantees and EPA and the other non-profits. In addition, we are well situated to encourage pollution prevention activities in advance of the new TSCA rules that will be coming out. Obviously, regulating a specific industry is the easiest way to reduce specific chemicals, but it takes a long concerted effort. Working within the voluntary pollution prevention programs or even through simpler reporting requirements (TRI), there is a reduced burden on industry and a reduction in hazardous waste. Most of the time, businesses also reap the benefits because fixed costs are reduced as well through less permitting, cheaper materials and reduced disposal cost.

We should be present in more public meetings in communities- and not just the regional staff.

We should be looking at ways to share data between countries. Many businesses are global - if we could share risk and hazard data with the EU and vice versa, it would reduce the burden for business and for the environmental agencies worldwide.

We spend so much money contracting out services to make graphics and data visualizations when plenty of free software exists. Unfortunately, due to EPA's licensing requirements, EPA cannot take advantage of these free tools-- even in cases where other federal agencies managed to procure agreements for them! Its a ridiculous waste of money. EPA staffers could make better quality products at no additional cost instead of going back and forth with contractors.

EPA does a lot to ensure that our own bottom is reduced, but we still are not using LED lighting. This is a simple fix now that we can pop the new LED bulbs into existing fixtures. If we are working on this, there has been no word. In addition, we need to consolidate Potomac Yards into HQ. It would make it easier to work with that staff, but also use less dollars towards leased space. In addition, instead of closing a regional office as a cost cutting measure - why not look to other federal space to see if we could move into their buildings.

Yes. Gaining access to free online tools (like Canva and Piktochart) for developing graphics should be a priority for the communications workers at this agency. We could save tons of money that is currently going to contractors.

Move on from lotus notes, EAS and people plus. These systems are antiquated and take too much time and money to update, and train staff on.

Offices should better utilize the tools provide to aid telework. If everyone was able to use Adobe connect and Skype better, we could save time communicating with people who are out of office. The number of people who do not know how to utilize these tools is sobering.

The Agency's contracts system is seriously broken (slow, often unresponsive, creating delays). This should be a top priority to fix.

I used to work at a state agency. They are in even worse budget shape than the federal govt. We should almost always partner with them, but if we simply put more requirements on them without any serious added resources, they will not be able to meet the new requirements.

Keep the federal programs we run that provide technical assistance to states, locals, tribes... It is a perfect federal role to develop and provide resources to help them run their programs in the most efficient way possible.

Support voluntary partnership programs that help reduce costs for state et al to meet environmental requirements, but in a way that is intrinsically consistent with markets and the private sector -- but only if the partnership programs are effective. Double-down on those that are, and scrap those that are not.

I think there is vast untapped potential in EPA data systems. Bring in a real IT/API expert to figure out how to most effectively make all these reams of data (e.g., TRI) more accessible and usable by citizens. They can then hold us accountable to what they will identify as the most critical local problems they face, rather than just Washington deciding what's most important.

We should align environmental programs to enable high jobs producing sectors of the future (electric vehicles, energy storage, renewables) which are also essential competitive areas for the U.S. to maintain superiority in globally.

See above. More partnership programs with states, locals, and industry.

Also, do a real risk analysis of environmental exposures and risks. Are things like indoor air (unregulated) of as great concern as outdoor air (highly regulated)? If so, let's put resources there.

How about the ability to fire people, at minimum, who engage in seriously inappropriate activity (selling things onsite; looking at porn), and more broadly are raging underperformers (let alone just poor performers)? Good luck with this, as the unions are required to defend all, but it would boost morale of everyone else to have these clunkers removed from the agency.

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EPA as a whole needs to do a better job of workforce planning. In other words, you need to have the right people in the right positions in the right locations. In my time with the agency, since 1998, I have seen reorganizations, buyouts, and hiring and it never fails to amaze me that people never actually look at the work load, the current need, and the projected need in performing these things. It always seems to be about empire building or realigning to justify the number of FTE's. EPA as a whole also needs to flatten the organization and I don't mean by redefining positions to make the appear to be below the line rather than above the line. I would never like to see people lose jobs over these types of initiatives by attrition can help if done correctly. You can't simply eliminate an FTE just because someone vacates it if that position is a critical need position. Likewise, you can't justify keeping FTE's when someone leaves where we are over staffed. Identify those jobs which could be removed and offer the people in them the chance to retrain to fill a critical needs position if at all possible.

stop cleaning the bathrooms, and dusting three times a day. Stop watering the grass, stop growing grass - let it go wild.

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Administrations that focus myopically on deregulation as if it is a mythical savior. Read the comments from the Makah Tribe in their comments to EO 13777. Regulations are in place to ensure a level playing field for all businesses, protect human health and the environment, and promote transparency and fairness. The rhetoric coming from people like Administrator Pruitt and his chief of staff, lumping all regulations in as one "bad" belie either ignorance, or, most likely, antipathy towards the work we do.

The treat of budget cuts, staff lay-offs, elimination of environmentally important projects, and statements (such as elimination of important environmental regulation that ensure healthy ecosystems and human health) from the EPA political leaders and the President has a devastating impact on staff moral and for sure impact staff efficiency. This can be improved by respecting and make the EPA staff feeling appreciated and important by their words and actions!

I believe there are already measurements in place to achieve this.

We aren't in the customer service industry. Better outcomes come from promoting strong, ethical values from the top down. Currently, the Administrator and his staff's communications would lead one to believe that our "customers" are small businesses and industries and that the priority is ensuring their lives are easier. We are tasked by Congress with enforcing the environmental laws on the books. Ensuring that those laws are fully enforced is our "service." Our customers are the people of the United States of America, not one segment of business or industry. All people. Those customers deserve a robustly funded, respected, values-driven EPA that is not forced to be the punching bag for every Republican or industry-friendly politician across America. It may play well with a segment of voters, but those same voters will be upset when EPA lacks the personnel or resources to protect them from the next environmental crisis.

I believe it is already good, but of course it can be improved with better communication.

Reduce the reliance on contractors for every thing we do. While it is true that sometimes a private contractor can do something more efficiently, the obsession with outsourcing government work can sometimes lead to higher costs and worse work. And it is another attack on the federal workforce. We've already been demoralized enough through incessant attacks from politicians like Administrator Pruitt.

Nothing come to mind

Computers. Improve our computing power. Stop boondoggle contracts with companies like Microsoft. Use the power of search engines like Google to improve our storage and search capabilities. Our website is a joke, and the search functions are worse. My computer looks like a replica of the one I used as a freshman in college in the 90s. I know this administration is antagonistic towards spending money on agencies, but increasing our IT and computer software/hardware budget would be helpful in making us more efficient and effective.

Improve audio-visual equipment and operators - this will reduce travel cost.

I don't know what this means, but if it means what I think you want it to mean - ie handing off work to other agencies or states - your fixation is misplaced. We are already operating at staff and budget levels a fraction of what we ought to be doing. Save money elsewhere - How about the 125 billion the Pentagon is wasting on contractors? Show some moral and intellectual honesty. This entire survey is a red herring.

Set-up meetings (even standing meetings) with different agencies at the higher and lower levels - especially in cities where the agencies are relatively closely located.

Nothing come to mind

1170

5/22/2017

Everything has been pushed down to the employee, thus you'll have inefficient time being spent on preparing training forms, travel, or other administrative activities and when there is an issue or problem whether with the system or the user, the user spends typically an inordinate amount of time trying to fix the problem. Thus, you may have high salaried people spending way too much time on non mission critical work, it is inefficient. I'd suggest designated local, administrative centers to handle these types of important yet non technical/professional matter.

Every state, tribe and local community is different in its approach - whether because of resources or policy choices; thus, Regions and their Regional Administrator should be sensitive to the needs of those groups and recognize their differences. However, transboundary pollution whether air, water, waste requires a benchmark or baseline in the protections afforded all Americans whether living in a mid western state or an eastern state or a western state. Delegated environmental programs to the states address this problem in large measure, EPA should be at the forefront of facilitating outcomes which bring the results that the individual state or states desire without jeopardizing the baseline of human health and environmental protections provided by Congress.

Roundtables in each Region where these groups can bring their priority issues, with some limitation on how many issues at each roundtable.

Use of technology to manage environmental protections, where the electronic information is submitted and there is less need for actual boots on the ground.

See the enforcement's idea of next generation, get the program offices on board with writing permits that include these innovative technologies.

Working with our partners on their priorities, which should direct how EPA approaches its mission.

Private sector use of telework with solid accountability for production of services. Some corporations don't even have offices besides satellite offices, could save money from GSA ownership.

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In OPPTs, Risk Assessment Division, a more effective management system for the existing chemicals assessment process is needed. One suggestion would be to truly delegate technical decision-making (not just administrative tasks) to branch managers/management leads assigned to existing chemical teams. They should be trusted members of the management team that are integrated into the workflow. Instead, all decisions are funneled and delayed at the Division Director level. If the Division Director wants to maintain complete oversight of all technical decisions, then more frequent engagement is needed to make interim decisions (on a much more frequent basis - at least weekly) to eliminate speculation/discord amongst teams and to move the technical process forward.

The systems that we use, FPPS, WTTs, and Monster are all very challenging to use, and I find it extremely difficult to be proficient in my job when I am forced to wait on a system to talk to another system, or when there are connectivity issues-which happens frequently. FPPS is also very difficult to navigate to look up an employee's record.

I think our division is making a concerted effort in partnering with the private sector in implementing the new Lautenberg Act and where possible (a significant portion of our work involves Confidential Business Information).

No comment.

We are in the process of doing exactly that in implementing the Lautenberg Act

No comment.

Not in my Division.

Yes, I believe our Division is in the process of creating a new Electronic Management System to manage the New Chemicals work flow. For existing chemicals, we could possibly enact a management system such as Confluence.

Better IT for alternate worksite. Better teleconference lines- the line has been broken in our conference room for some time.

We need a better, more efficient HR processing system.

Yes, there could be joint projects with OSHA or the Consumer Products Safety Commission regarding chemical usage and safety.

We could try using Confluence as a task management system. However, the government is not a private business nor do processes such as those found in the private sector necessarily apply to government processes - particularly the legal mandates, legal procedures (eg., proposed documents/rule publication, public comment, etc) that dictate and often constrain EPA's processes.

We need a better, more efficient HR processing system.

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Please reference Q. 5 below.

Not applicable for my position.

Not applicable for my position.

Please see Q. 5 below.

The use of electronic signatures and routing for all forms would be more efficient. There are still several forms and routing reviews which are handled in paper only. This slows the process down and can lead to documents being lost in route. Several of our practices are already electronic with electronic signatures allowed as authorization. All of them should be done this way for efficiency, speed and tracking purposes.

I am a Contracting Officer at EPA and have worked at several other government agencies. Contract actions entered into EAS (acquisition system used by EPA) need manual obligation or de-obligation by RTP. All other agencies that I have worked at have EAS directly linked to the financial system so that actions are immediately obligated or de-obligated when contract award is made by the Contracting Officer. At EPA, additional staff at RTP are required to manually obligate or de-obligate funds after the Contracting Officer has made the award in EAS. The manual obligation or deobligation of funds by RTP is not always done correctly or for the correct contract line items. Please have EAS directly interface with the financial system and write a program that automatically obligates or de-obligates funding for the contract line items specified by the Contracting Officer in EAS when award is made. This would greatly reduce staff time, be more efficient and more effective. Again, other agencies are doing this (including the National Park Service acquisition system, PRISM,FBMS)....Not sure why it is not done this way at EPA.

Please develop a better system for displaying contracts that can be used EPA wide. All regions need access to a COMPLETE listing of contracts that are available for use EPA wide for acquiring supplies or services.

Please see Q. 5 above.

A best practice in the federal civil rights community is the use of full time counselors focused on providing opportunities to resolve disputes. Our use of part-time counselors lends to marginal attempts at resolution; incorrect or incomplete information provided to customers and an image that the program is not important enough to provide professional, full time, civil rights practitioners. Providing the slots and commensurate funding for a professional cadre is another means of showing leaderships commitment to a model EEO program.

1177

5/22/2017

The Action Development Process can be redundant and overly burdensome especially if any AA-ship drags their feet on Option Selection or table their concerns to maximize their lavage at FAR. Hardening the requirements for prompt identification of issues and requiring outcomes/solutions from any raised objections (i.e., can propose hypothetical or ideological concerns) from ADP meetings might help. In addition, creating timely review parameters (i.e., how long a supervisor should take to review a certain product) for first and second line supervisors would dramatically improve agency efficiency.

As part of EPA employee and supervisors review, have a semi-annual (2-3 years) survey of their stakeholders that can be used to evaluate effectiveness.

Provide the public with more contact information of EPA officials throughout the ranks. Directories should be expansive and provide general public with multiple POCs for various issues. It can be difficult for stakeholders and the general public to make initial contact with EPA. It might also be valuable to create an online form that allows the public and stakeholders to submit information to EPA about their customer experience. This could be used to help craft awards or help identify program offices that have deficiencies.

Crowd source major projects to EPA employees. Skills Marketplace has really opened up opportunities but EPA should allow employees the ability to quickly and efficiently take on projects outside of their AA-ship. This could be achieved by requiring all EPA staff (with limited exceptions) to have 10% of their time as flexible/unassigned. Employees could sign up for tasks or take on non-standard work items and decide if they want to be evaluated for that time (which would only benefit them) or leave those projects they undertake as non-evaluated tasks. This is similar to Skills Marketplace but would not require management approval to undertake task and would allow EPA to better respond to new issues.

Better use and culture towards using cloud computing and virtual meeting places. Investments in virtual meeting technologies will enable better virtual workplace experiences and better accountability of remotely working staff.

Improving and furthering remote workplaces would be prudent. Remote workplaces, if done properly, reduces cost of business. Management needs to be taught about how to appropriately managed remote staff but if EPA took on a model that follow innovators in the private sector (i.e., Google) that focuses on output based on milestones and not simply time-and-attendance, EPA could quickly improve efficiency and identify high proficient work staff as well as identify effective managers.

Central table for all the currently approved CSFs for every company:

Currently, CSFs are scattered, some in the jackets, some in the e-jackets, and some somewhere in between. Centralizing a repository for all currently approved CSFs, makes it more efficient to locate the most recent CSFs for the regulatory and scientific review. There are also instances where superseded CSFs are not marked as so. During the process of organizing a central CSF table, superseded CSFs will be identified and removed from further consideration by reviewers.

Consider flattening the organization again. In the current organization there are so many levels of management - which costs more and decreases efficiency.

The agency needs to reduce its dependence on contractors for providing IT services. There are so many stove-piped contracts in place.. The contractors do not work together; there is limited to zero communication between contractors, there is redundancy in services, and there is limited (if any) federal oversight by anyone that understands the technology. Any attempts to adopt new technology results in throwing more money at a contract. It does not work. It is not efficient. It has become very expensive and we seem to keep going backward from a technology standpoint.

Another missed opportunity at EPA is the services provided through the working capital fund (WCF). The idea behind the WCF is good, but there doesn't seem to be any review or basic reality check on costs associated with the services. An example - hosting costs. The monthly fees to host a server or service in the NCC are very, very high (I'm guessing the fees are set to cover costs for big contracts). There doesn't seem to be any truth-checking or independence for the costs on these services and there doesn't seem to be any way to promote new ideas, like cloud storage or cheaper options. Instead, the service providers put together the costs - and what incentive is there to change a service? why would a for-profit contractor suggest something less expensive? In addition, the people voting on fees and services are in upper management who, in many cases, do not have the expertise to determine if we are getting a good service\deal.

1180 5/22/2017

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The EPA staff is currently required to spend too much time taking and passing mandatory annual training courses. The content and priority of these training courses should be reviewed with the objective of transferring all or most of them to bi-annual training sessions.

Simplify,streamline and/or reduce the number of approvals that are needed for things such as purchasing and travel.

Simplify and streamline the requirements for managing contracts. Quite often the overhead required to administer and document contract activities can take more time than performing the actual tasks.

Partnering with outside organizations which rely on and need Federal funding costs money. EPA can't reduce its grant commitments to the States and Tribes at a time when most States are struggling to keep up the environmental funding available from their own legislatures. And funding to localities for achieving environmental remediation results through Brownfield programs needs to be increased. These programs are an economic engine for local communities that leverage many more new dollars than the cost of the original grants. In other words, we are succeeding at "spending money to make money."

EPA is the best agency capable of managing infrastructure funds in the areas of drinking water purification and waste water management. Consequently, we need to be fighting to increase the Agency's budget for the nation's water infrastructure program and the nation's Brownfield remediation program. These programs work together to make cleaner and healthier water and land available for both urban and rural areas.

Share databases.

Harmonize and synchronize standard operating procedures and reporting templates.

I think EPA is currently doing a good job at customer service - much better than most government agencies. Our biggest continuous need is keep listening to outside groups to hear and try to accommodate their ideas for communicating more effectively - with face-to-face meetings, conference calls, and social media outlets.

Reward and encourage highly productive employees. Hold unproductive employees accountable for increasing their productivity or offer them demotion if they choose not meet the requirements of their job description.

At the EPA upper management level, there are probably still too many face-to-face meetings that could be accomplished with video-audio participation technology (e.g., Skype, Adobe Connect). This would free up manager time and reduce travel costs. The travel budget would be better used for communicating face-to-face with external parties like State managers, key NGO groups, and even local enviro organizations that would benefit from face-to-face meetings with EPA to demonstrate that EPA cares about their concerns.

Develop green chemistry methods for analytical work across all agency programs. Contract labs as well as agency labs are required to use many analytical methods that were developed years or decades ago and require large amounts of toxic or hazardous chemicals.

Identify and eliminate duplication of efforts.

Encourage collaboration to reduce duplication of efforts.

Finding information on our agency intranet is very difficult and wastes the administrative time of our employees. The amount of time staff members invest trying to find information internal to the agency is known as a "clutter tax." The more time staff spend trying to filter through a clutter of outdated and unmanaged content, the more it costs the agency and the employees in wasted time. More senior leader support is needed for the Office of Internal Communications and Office of Environmental Information proposal to clean up the agency intranet like EPA recently did with the public website. Such an effort would be very valuable in making employees more efficient.

n/a

n/a

Roughly 80% of companies now run on open source software to manage their intranets to save money. However, EPA's current methods for managing its intranet is extremely costly and not conducive to advancing the EPA's work or saving the organizing money. The agency allows every region and program office to manage multiple servers and intranet accounts called TSSMS accounts. These multiple accounts and servers cost the agency thousands of dollars each year. By adopting Drupal as the intranet standard for the entire agency (like the EPA did for the public website EPA.gov), the EPA could save up to \$1 million while also improving the management of intranet content to make employees more efficient.

Moving forward with the Office of Internal Communications and Office of Environmental Information proposal to adopt a standard intranet strategy and platform across the agency would greatly increase our efficiency. It would improve information sharing and also reduce costs. A platform like Drupal, best known as the open-source platform behind public websites like Whitehouse.gov and our own EPA.gov, is also a good option to manage our intranet since we already invest in it. However, EPA currently allows regions and program offices to use multiple different platforms to manage their internal websites. There is no standard, so the agency is spending a lot of money at all levels for multiple platforms that are not integrated and do not work well with one another. This requires a lot of resources to maintain for little return on investment. Information is still cluttered and mismanaged, and it's difficult to transition from one site to another. Drupal is a proven tool that is effective for the EPA public website, and it is a proven platform for corporate intranets of all sizes and industries. EPA must standardize its intranet to save money and limit the amount of resources and contract dollars invested to manage it. ORD has proven such a transition saves a lot of money.

n/a

ORD has reduced the amount of contract dollars it spends annually on public website support as a result of its Drupal migration. ORD also reduced costs by eliminating unnecessary servers and TSSMS accounts after transitioning its intranet to Drupal (like the agency did for the public website). However, EPA has not adopted this strategy agency-wide. The Office of Internal Communications and Office of Environmental Information could use ORD as a case study to adopt Drupal as a standard intranet tool to manage all agency internal websites. We already use this platform for the public website (EPA.gov), so it makes good business sense to eliminate the cost of managing multiple servers and TSSMS accounts and use Drupal to manage both the public and restricted websites. Using Drupal can consolidate a lot of resources and also place the management of content back in the hands of content managers instead of spending money for contractors to upload information for employees.

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There have been hundreds of pages of guidance issued over the past decade or so - if not thousands of pages, on environmental justice (over 200 pages!), delegations of authority, nationally significant issues, Next Generation, model settlement justification memorandum, model litigation report memorandum. And - unbelievably, there is no index to all the guidance documents. You have to ask around and cross your fingers hoping you found everything relevant. Are all the guidance documents really needed? Why the heck isn't there an index to them?

Contracts Management is extremely slow and sometimes non responsive. The milestones they set up to process PRs are often not achieved.

It would be nice if there was a way to share penalties with our state partners in an administrative enforcement action. Our state partners provide terrific assistance in these matters, in my experience. But, when a state joins our enforcement action, we must pursue a civil judicial path so we can share penalties with the state.

Communications

Better technology and technology support will improve customer service to all. We also need an electronic system to update our state implementation plans. It would help get the state submissions approved more efficiently since we would already have a compilation of the law the state was changing because right now, we don't always have this. Many regions are decades behind in compiling these state implementation plans (under the Clean Air Act) even though the Clean Air Act requires EPA to compile these plans every 3 years. The law that EPA is required to enforce is not compiled - not online or in a book.

Communications and the periodization of needs coupled with risk factors.

Too many of our regulations are very poorly written and even internally, we can't understand how to comply. Drafting rules that are easier to understand but that don't get the absolute maximum pollutant reduction from each source - might still end up with an overall environmental benefit if there are more people complying. We would probably get the same environmental benefit if we had rules that were very easy to understand, and very easy to enforce because more people would comply and it would be easier to spot noncompliance. Instead, we draft super specific rules to squeeze out every last pollutant reduction from all these different categories of sources - too many of our rules are frustrating, poorly written and difficult to comply with and enforce

Reduce layers of middle management. Divisions and Branches do not need deputies. Consider eliminating Divisions entirely and consolidate into Offices.

General Services Administration is very challenging to deal with. For example, the GSA badging office is open Mondays and Wednesdays until noon in region 4. That's it, no other times. And when GSA codes your badge, GSA doesn't tell you it takes a week to 10 days to start working, so you try to get into the building and your badge doesn't work. Why wouldn't GSA explain this to you when you are at the badging office? GSA's communications are poor. Often, you cannot tell what information is being shared. And there seems to be little accountability. At any given day, at least one of the garage doors on the parking garage are not working. Once, I had to leave early, and the guards could not get any of the garage doors to go up to let me out. It is very demoralizing and makes you wonder why you try so hard at your job when people around you don't seem to care at all about doing their jobs well. If the garage doors were a once-in-a-while problem, it would make sense but its an everyday problem and that doesn't make sense.

In my experience, our state partners are very happy to have the EPA utilizing federal resources to solve problems in their states. States send us the matters that they lack resources to deal with.

Count our accomplishments differently to give staff and managers incentive to put time and effort into work the administration wants done - for example, give credit for investigations that show a company is in compliance because that's great and it takes time to do these investigations but right now, we don't get credit for this type of thing. Or, start giving credit for notices of warning instead of only giving credit for penalty actions. Or, start giving credit for work performed to improve our rules. Right now, no one puts resources into improving our rules because this effort doesn't get counted. Give credit for work that fixes problems or maybe give credit for identifying problems to be fixed.

The Federal Register has archaic rules that were likely developed prior to widespread use of personal computers. The Federal Register Document Drafting Handbook is 228 pages long. Many of the requirements are unnecessary and require additional resources for (1) FR staff to develop the rules and (2) agency staff time to assure compliance with the requirements. I would conduct a review from outside the FR office to make recommendations on ways to streamline the FR office requirements to reduce staffing and printing costs across the federal government.

For example, when a rule is amended the agency is required to use amendatory text. This approach is not only difficult for the public to understand, but it is also prone to mistakes and an unnecessary use of agency resources. It is common practice to put a track changes (i.e., redline strikeout) in the docket so the public can more easily understand the amendments. This document could also be used by the FR office directly. This would simplify the rulemaking process and save printing costs since the amendatory language would no longer need to be included in the official FR notice.

Develop a policy of limiting penalties for the regulated community that self reports violations. This would recognize the environmental benefit of coming into compliance instead of incentivizing covering up issues.

Partner with states, tribes, local communities, and the private sector in recognizing the long term environmental and cost savings benefit of innovative/emerging technologies. Currently, emission standards are often based on the technology that achieves the lowest emission rate for the specific pollutant of concern with secondary considerations of costs, other environmental impacts, and technology development. There is limited incentive for the regulated community to participate in technology demonstrations. If the innovative technology is not able to achieve the required emission standard the end user will (1) likely be fined and (2) be required to remove the innovative technology and install the control technology the standard is based on. Allow the development of site specific emission standards in situations where both the regulated entity and the delegated enforcement authority agree that an innovative emission control technology has promise for more effective emission control at lower costs. To encourage development of new technologies, the EPA should recognize that in these cases the actual level of control will not be known until the technology is demonstrated. If the technology ends up not being able to achieve the otherwise required emission standard, a site-specific standard should be developed based on what the technology can achieve. While specific sites might not be controlled as tightly as under the business as usual approach, overall technology would be developed that would lower overall nationwide emissions at reduced cost.

Allow technical staff to give tentative direction on their understanding on how to comply with rules while OECA conducts a more formal review. It can take months or longer to receive responses to formal interpretations requests. Therefore, technical staff often receive questions on rule requirements they worked on from both the regulated community and regulators that are trying in good faith to comply with the requirements. However, OECA staff discourage technical staff from giving any guidance because it decreases the ability of the EPA from accessing potential future penalties. The goal should be assisting in compliance and not maximizing penalties. If a technical staff understanding is later found to be incorrect, then the source should be allowed to come into compliance with limited penalties.

Have periodic independent desk audits of senior staff (GS14 and higher) to assure that (1) the expertise is aligned with current agency needs and (2) the staff are doing work that is commensurate with the higher GS level. If staff are determined not to be meeting the requirements to justify the GS level, they should be given the opportunity to transfer to any open senior staff positions they qualify for in the federal government or accept a lower GS level. It is not uncommon for staff to be promoted but at some later point are no longer performing at the expected level. Currently, these staff are either left in the position or moved to another positions while maintaining their GS level. This is (1) an inefficient use of agency resources and (2) blocks other staff from promotions since there are no positions available. Moving forward, replace some permanent promotions with (1) long term temporary promotions (fewer in number than the eliminated permanent promotions) to complete specific tasks and (2) more money for staff bonuses for high performing employees. This would not only encourage continued high performance, but it would also reduce long term pension costs to the federal government if temporary promotions and bonuses are not included in base salary for pension purposes.

Extend the probationary work period from 1 year to 3 years. This would allow a greater period of time to determine if staff skills and agency needs are aligned.

Develop a clear path for managers and staff to understand for dealing with poor performing staff. Currently managers have no incentive/requirement to deal with underperforming staff. The easiest approach is to assign that staff minimal work and continue to give them scheduled step increases any annual bonus that is commensurate with what other staff in the group receive. This is a poor use of resources and discourages other staff.

Develop flexible staffing positions that are assigned to the agency, office, or division level instead of a particular group. Certain parts of the agency add staff during periods of high workload. However, the additional positions often stay after the workload has decreased. Having flexible staff would make it easier to reassign staff resources as workloads change across the agency.

Use the electronic docket more effectively and publish less material in the Federal Register. The Federal Register should provide adequate material for the public to understand what the agency is doing. Regulatory text, compliance with executive orders, and other rationale/discussions should be included in the electronic docket. This would reduce printing costs while still providing adequate public notice of agency actions.

Expand the use of the Talent Hub. This is a great program to efficiently use staff resources and develop staff talent. However, there is a perception from managers that allowing staff to participate will reduce future resource allocations. It should be communicated that use of the Talent Hub will be viewed positively in terms of developing staff and efficient use of resources.

Minimize overlap in agency functions. For example, EPA's Energy Star and WaterSense programs overlap with programs at the Department of Energy. The DOE is tasked with establishing minimum energy efficiency and water use standards. It would be more efficient for the same staff and supervisor at the DOE to develop Energy Star and WaterSense guidelines at the same time and minimum standards are developed. In addition to the cost savings, this would assure consistency. Labeling of products without minimum standards could either stay at the EPA or be moved to the DOE.

Reverse evaluations where anonymous staff comments become part of supervisory and senior staff records and are used as part of their evaluation. Consistent poor reviews could contribute to the demotion of that supervisor/senior staff.

Evaluate anonymous peer to peer reviews that are used in performance evaluations. This could be used as a way to address poor performing staff.

Conduct an independent audit to explore ways to reduce unnecessary management levels and assure that staff to supervisor ratios match industry best practices. In my experience, groups and divisions are too small and managers are engaged in technical work instead of focusing on managing staff. Ratios of 12 or 15:1 technical staff/division per manager/division director might be more appropriate than current levels. Reducing the number of supervisors could reduce payroll and pension costs and increase personnel efficiency.

1187 5/22/2017

1188 5/22/2017

Getting training approved through the Training Offices is sometimes laborious, even when the supervisor has already approved and funded the training. This is particularly true for group training events. It seems if the supervisor authorizes the training and fund it, there should be no need for another person (Training Office) to approve.

If we have a system for procuring items through the purchase card, why is it necessary to have a "Purchase Card log". All of the information provided on the log is the same in the system on the PR. This seems a bit redundant. If the current system (Web Forms or EAS) does not include all information needed, let's fix the system to include all necessary information or use another system which meets the needs for all information on our purchases.

Also, there is too much "legal overhead" in the processing of both informal and formal complaints in the Office of Civil Rights. It takes way too long to get Final Agency Decisions and other letters of acceptance, etc., issued to complainants due to long waits for legal review. Sometimes simple processes, responses, etc., are held up for months.

Finally, there needs to be a clear message from Senior Management/Executives to all levels of management re participating in Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) in EEO cases as well as other misunderstandings or communication issues. Some Offices think they are above participating in ADR, which could cost the Agency big \$ by not participating in good faith or not participating at all, resulting in formal EEO complaints for the Agency.

I would continue to support efforts to consolidate admin systems. Anything that reduces the number of systems that we have to work with helps. I would also support continuing to move systems out of Lotus Notes and into Microsoft SharePoint or equivalent.

N/A

I think it would be good to develop a strategy for each office to reach out to stakeholders. I tend to think that having periodic stakeholder forums would be a good idea, but I would like for it to be a part of a larger outreach strategy.

N/A

We need to make sure we are responsive to the public. I've been so frustrated lately with responses to the public getting held up. We need to be more efficient and provide timely responses. Also, FR notices, we need to keep them moving...

There continues to be a lack of support for managers in the area of discipline for problem employees -- particularly with conduct issues. Employees continue to be insubordinate with seemingly no accountability, which results in less productivity due to poor morale of other employees witnessing and experiencing disruptions in the workplace by employees with poor attitudes, attendance, etc. Employees who conscientiously do their jobs have increased workloads due to problem employees not being held accountability for work they are assigned, creating a poor work environment/poor morale and decreasing productivity. Hold managers accountable for their actions in holding employees accountable, and give managers the support they need to stand up to non-productive, insubordinate employees.

Not really. We do so much with the little bit that we have. If anything, we need to build stronger partnerships with stakeholders, so that they can effectively help us meet our goals. For instance, working with volunteer monitoring groups to collect good quality data. Then again, that usually necessitates some funding for capacity building. The cycle continues...

There are always new technologies out there that would be helpful in streamlining work and processes. However, many times, the folks who are on the front lines are not consulted when deciding to move to the new technologies/systems; therefore, resulting in systems that are inefficient and laborious. Adopt new technologies and processes, but do so while working with those who actually use the processes and technologies to ensure proper implementation, training, etc.

Not that I can think of.

Do more networking with other Agencies on like services provided to showcase best practices that could be helpful/more efficient for all.

With other federal agencies, it would be good to have a liaison to key federal partners at each office. And make sure everyone knows who that is. So that, if I want to work on an issue with Forest Service, I know who to go to.

Do more networking with other Agencies through the local Federal Executive Boards to share resources -- training, ADR mediators, COOP resources, etc. Work together as brother/sister Federal agencies instead of against each other in a spirit of competition.

None come to mind at this time.

1189 5/22/2017

1190 5/22/2017

I believe that there is a big gap in between management and employees. Managers are not fully trained and are not accountable. Upper management failed to take action if manager doesn't comply with the rules. Upper management supports supervisors and asking employees to get help from the Unions instead of resolving issues. It directly affects job duties and harassed employees. Management made internal ADR rules but doesn't follow if complain about supervisors. These rules can only be applied on employees, not on management which is affecting our job. Management should me more accountable.

Not applicable.

Partnering with states, tribes, local communities, or the private sector is one of the best approach to receive better results e.g. involve states, tribes, local communities to prevent duplicate work and to better understand the needs.

One day, hopefully in the near future, efforts taken by regulators to protect human health and the environment, will secure public/private support and visibility to help more effectively demonstrate the return on investment that constituent derive from administrative/technical refinements that foster the reuse/revitalization of our universe of sites. The information collection burden process needs to be revisited and incentives developed to help foster public/private collaboration to help better communicate and convey the return on investment derived from ongoing efforts. The current process has room for improvement.

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We live in an information management age yet very little value is placed on the importance of maintaining online details. When budgets are cut, communications and outreach efforts are curtailed and services relied upon to provide better "customer service" are correspondingly curtailed. I'm NOT SURE if the current evaluation process clearly captures the value & importance of maintaining accurate information on websites as a catalyst, for transparency!

-

Not sure!

- Reduce management chain and make management more accountable,
- Improve employees management relations
- Reduce approval process chain and improve approval services.

TBD

-

Provide structured opportunities for staff to contribute ideas and recommendations to enhance collaborations like the Partnership In Sustainable Communities (OSC) and enhance collaboration with their peers in other federal agencies working on mutually aligned projects (e.g., some of these opportunities should be listed by corresponding program priorities. The current effort requires review of budgets and budgets which could/should be more easily aligned in this day and age of information management.

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Recognition for public-private collaborations that foster organizational, operational and cost efficiencies that are touted like the "Big Apple Brownfields Awards" - <http://www.nycbrownfieldpartnership.org/awards>

1191 5/22/2017

1192 5/22/2017

Many of our systems and databases continue to be clunky and disjointed: Webforms and people plus are not connected, webforms has many forms that cannot be filled and submitted, Lotus Notes still needs to be used for international travel approval, info cannot always be found easily on the Intranet, and when you find it, it doesn't always have helpful links and you still need to search for what you need (for example, trying to change health benefits for a QLE- info is not clear). Other examples include obtaining certain IT improvements, such as a converter cord to hook up to a display screen, or a new hands free headset-- in my experience, admin staff point to EZTech and EZTech points to Admin staff, and it took months and lots of wasted work time for me to try to get a \$10 piece of equipment.

The process of completing timesheets is not linked and synchronized with requests for leave, although they are the same system creating inaccuracies in leave balances. Make them work together.

Actually implement the regs we have promulgated and which have gone through multiple rounds of public comment and legal and policy analysis.

Keep scientifically-based information on our website rather than replace it with climate change denial. American citizens rely on EPA for unbiased, scientifically-backed information and data. We lose credibility when we remove this from our website.

Consolidate space and save \$ by moving Potomac Yard into the Federal Triangle space- would save on lease and shuttle bus.

Assess the need for and use of Transit Subsidies in regions/HQ where they would use public transportation regardless of the benefit. There could be some cost savings there.

Managers need to be supportive of SharePoint and OneDrive. Many staff have taken the initiative to not only use these systems, but also train fellow staff and managers on how to use them, and yet managers still seem resistant to using them and often are THE roadblock. These systems, when used properly, have greatly increased efficiencies and improved workflow, and we should not have our own management be the ones standing in the way of workplace improvements! Also, move all our systems to use Chrome, not IE.

1193 5/22/2017

1194 5/22/2017

I am slowed down by the current requirement to get any external communications, inspections, and enforcement actions approved through Headquarters and the Administrator's office. This is occurring due to the lack of Regional Administrators that are trusted by the Administrator to implement EPA's mission. These delays mean that EPA cannot quickly respond to citizen's complaints because we need approval from the administrator's office to visit a farm or a power plant or a mine site. These delays mean that pollution is allowed to occur while we sit in our offices and wait for Headquarters to approve our work. The Administrator's office needs to trust the Acting Regional Administrators to do their jobs and not micromanage all of the region's work.

Changes in priorities. Uncertain funding situations.

EPA needs to maintain its current budget and staffing levels in order to have enough staff to support our state, tribal, local, and federal partners. EPA needs to maintain its current funding levels of the many grants that EPA provides to all of these partners. The president's proposed budget threatens to cut Public Water System Supervision grants to states to monitor public water systems and protect drinking water. The president's proposed budget threatens to eliminate all funding to the Chesapeake Bay, which has begun to improve in recent years thanks to EPA leadership and financial and technical support. The president's proposed budget also threatens to cut funding to EPA's Superfund program, which Administrator Pruitt has said is one of his priorities, and the Brownfields grant program, which would reduce EPA's ability to partner with states, tribes, and cities to clean up polluted sites, repurpose them for redevelopment, and create jobs and improve the local economies. So in order to achieve better environmental results, the Administrator needs to fight to preserve EPA's funding and protect EPA's funding and staff from the President's proposed budget.

Community outreach to schools, NGOs, local governments, etc.

The Administrator needs to trust the Acting Regional Administrators to be able to communicate appropriately with the public. Currently, all external communications need to be vetted through the Administrator's office, which means the Regions cannot provide good customer service and prompt responses to the public and the American taxpayer.

Engage in open conversation. Define and mutually agree upon program directions, goals, etc. Honesty is the best policy.

Our state partners are already dealing with smaller budgets and fewer staff in their environmental programs. In order to maintain environmental protection for all Americans, the Administrator needs to stand up to the president's proposed budget and advocate for maintaining EPA's budget in order to continue to provide funding and grants to our state, local, and tribal partners.

YES. Eliminate landscaping and introduce zeroscaping to EPA campus. Simply allow native species to grow on campus without introducing new exotic plants every spring, etc. This would save labor, money, and other resources and would only require periodic trimming, mowing, etc. This would make grounds more eco-friendly to native pollinators, etc. Can also implement and use on-site composting for campus lawn maintenance instead of purchasing mulch, etc.

EPA should develop and implement electronic concurrence packages. Currently, we need to print out and walk around concurrence packages for letters, mailings, and enforcement actions. An electronic signature system for concurrence packages would improve efficiencies and allow for more effective processes.

Get rid of internet explorer and replace with Google Chrome.

In order to be best aligned with our state partners, EPA needs to maintain its current budget and staffing levels in order to have enough staff to support our state, tribal, local, and federal partners. EPA needs to maintain its current funding levels of the many grants that EPA provides to all of these partners. The president's proposed budget threatens to cut Public Water System Supervision grants to states to monitor public water systems and protect drinking water. The president's proposed budget threatens to eliminate all funding to the Chesapeake Bay, which has begun to improve in recent years thanks to EPA leadership and financial and technical support. The president's proposed budget also threatens to cut funding to EPA's Superfund program, which Administrator Pruitt has said is one of his priorities, and the Brownfields grant program, which would reduce EPA's ability to partner with states, tribes, and cities to clean up polluted sites, repurpose them for redevelopment, and create jobs and improve the local economies. So in order to achieve better environmental results, the Administrator needs to fight to preserve EPA's funding and protect EPA's funding and staff from the President's proposed budget.

Develop more points of communication/contact between different agencies.

Yes, EPA should not spend millions of dollars to fund 10 additional full-time security staffers to act as the Administrator's 24-7 bodyguards. This is a waste of OECA's budget funds and diverts taxpayer dollars from where they could be better spent in protecting human health and the environment. In the private sector, the three CEOs for Yahoo, Google, and Apple had a total 2016 security budget of \$1.115 million. Asking taxpayers to pay for such bodyguards is a ridiculous waste of money.

I can't think of any.

1195 5/22/2017

1196 5/22/2017

The current routing process to get documents signed is inefficient due to the majority of staff working off-site multiple days. Having to physically sign off on a document before it can proceed can often be delayed by multiple days due to one person not being in the office. I would suggest that we invest in a electronic routing process that way staff could review documents anywhere they are located.

A clear and consistent budget would allow the EPA to work towards the goals set out by the American people. Constant indecision surrounding the budget negotiations and whether or not 30% of EPA (or the entirety of ORD) will be losing their jobs has a negative effect on employee moral and effectiveness.

Do NOT cede all power to the states. There is a clear need and role for a national environmental agency.

Provide more funds and FTE to support EPA's current roles and responsibilities. More FTE to interact with states, tribes and local communities will make sure their needs are heard on the national stage.

EPA should get out of the business of community outreach, for example Watershed oriented work with community groups, these activities are great but they aren't regulatorily required and therefore in these lean times should be minimized.

To start- Reduce the budget and FTE for the reported full time security detail that Administrator pruit has requested. This budget should be reduced to 0, just as all previous administrators have had. Almost 1 million dollars could be saved, according to recent reports.

Our tools are somewhat antiquated, especially inspector related tools. Having real-time access to data and GIS location information onsite during an inspection could make activities much more efficient and effective.

ScienceHub should be done away with. The entire peer review process of publication makes this entire database redundant.

State agencies and federal agencies WILL NEVER have 100% alignment of interest. This attempt to "hand responsibility back to the states" is a transparent attempt by political appointees to place the responsibilities of federal agencies into the hands of less friendly and gerrymandered state legislatures, where they can then be destroyed quietly outside of the eye of the national public. So in the end, the EPA will never "accomplish more by realigning with states" and this idea is laughable.

The private sector does not have answers to all questions. Don't send out employee surveys that will be summarily ignored. Stop focusing on the notion that one must cut the budget of EPA in order to be "efficient" or to "increase accountability". This is a straw man argument and only provides public cover for those hoping to dismantle the efforts of EPA in order to enrich Big Polluters and corporate connections.

1197 5/22/2017

1198 5/22/2017

The international travel administrative processes for planning and getting approval are duplicative and outdated. Concur and FIAT need to be integrated into one platform that is fully supported by the agency's IT services.

I suggest that you ask the mail room to first ask the receiver of junk mail if they want it, and if they don't want the junk mail, ask the mail room personnel to call the vendors and have them stop sending flyers, booklets of supplies, advertisements, etc. (junk mail). A vendor that wants to sell there products sends a book to the supply room, contracts office, RA's office, etc., which is not needed and I see so much paper being wasted this way. Stop these vendors from sending something that will be tossed/recycled anyway.

1199 5/22/2017

1200 5/22/2017

Continue the funding that we have had in the recent past. Allow us to maintain the dedicated and well qualified workforce that diligently strives to protect the environment. Base decisions on sound science as we have in the past versus denying scientific fact and trying to silence the scientists that seek to protect the environment.

I don't know of anything no longer necessary but administrative support is sorely lacking at many lower levels. Staff shortages and inefficiencies prevent me from doing my job do to too many distractions for one person.

In general we already have an excellent relationship with the states and most other parties except for those that are violating environmental laws.

Consistent use of the Conflict Prevention and Resolution Program to aid in collaboration and conflict management strategies during partnering events and planning those events.

Do all that we can to protect the environment. As we have in the past, continue to involve the regulated community and seek input from them, but use the best science to form decisions.

See my answer to Q. 2.

Workplace conflict exists at many levels and is not fully addressed by the 1 staff member available for workplace conflict.

It seems there is a significant loss of productivity, in excess of 80%, when employees are in conflict and that is CLEARLY inefficient. The Workplace Solutions program, a headquarters only program, needs enhancement to help people deal with civility, conflict, collaboration and other issues in the workplace. Currently the program is having to use contractors to do some significant lifting in group conflicts and is challenged with multiple administrative tasks that seem to distract from being able to help employees. Imagine an increase in constructive productivity towards improving the environment if more workplace conflicts were addressed!

We shouldn't always be looking for new - sometimes we just need to talk and find out what is working so we can consider doing more of what does work, supporting what needs to be supported, and revising the things that aren't working.

In the way of new technologies...resources to support implementation is the key.

In the past, before there was an EPA, there was a hodge-podge of various state environmental regulations. There was no consistency and many businesses would locate in a state that had the lowest standard so less money would be spent on compliance and protecting the environment. EPA was established in part to bring consistency across this great nation.

Each agency has its own culture, so be wary of aligning with other cultures that may not be effective for they type of work.

Some other agencies have more robust workplace conflict management programs than EPA. Some benchmarking was recently completed to consider gaps in our program. Additionally, our program is only a HQ program and that leaves the regions without resources. Making this program a national program with the ability to address the road spectrum of conflict will improve performance and conduct issues by 80 - 100%.

1201

5/22/2017

having to obtain your immediate supervisors "approval" in order for you to go on a detail or temporary promotion which may allow you to gain useful skills and further your career development - often times you encounter a "selfish" mentality or a manager who "can't afford to lose you" and that then prevents you from forward movement.

having a direct liaison between key offices versus so many layers of people to go through for issues/concerns/topics of interest

a simple EPA hotline would suffice...a way to triage calls/complaints/compliments, whatever the comments or issues may be. they should then go to the liaison in each AAship

utilize the currently available but rarely supported flexiplace programs already in existence. Even though the message regarding these programs come from the top down, it's ALWAYS left to the "supervisor/managers" discretion and majority of the time the request to use these work/life balance options (even during mass transit outages) are denied. It's really quite sad and there are little no repercussions in order to "fight" such a determinations other than to go to the union - which is never seen as a "good" thing and then the employee is left with poor morale and difficulties concentrating on their work.

the use of Adobe connect and/or Skype moreso to enable flexiplace options as mentioned in Q.4

those Agencies which review our documents could be brought into the process earlier, perhaps when we are scheduling our registration review process timelines. USDA, FDA, etc.

holding managers accountable for causing undo stress and chaos with regards to their hiring practices, belittling treatment of employees, and their all around inability to manage effectively due to lack of training - most managers are placed in their positions as a way to receive a promotion not because they are qualified to perform the duties as assigned.